Rev. W. Erskine Blackburn, M.A.

# FAITH AND IMMORTALITY

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## A STUDY OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE LIFE TO COME

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LONDON : DUCKWORTH & CO.
HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN

*First published*, 1917.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY BILLING AND SONS, LTD., GUILDFORD.

DEDICATED

TO

THE SPLENDID YOUTH OF BRITAIN

WHO, AT THE CALL OF HONOUR AND DUTY,

CAME FORWARD, IN THE HOUR OF THEIR COUNTRY'S NEED,

TO FIGHT, TO SUFFER, AND TO DIE—

THAT SHE MAY LIVE.

* * *

" It is not growing like a tree
In bulk doth make man perfect be,
Or standing long, an oak three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere.
A lily of a day,
Is fairer far in May.
Although it fall and fade after a night,
It is the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauty see,
And in short measures life may perfect be."

BEN JONSON.

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# PREFACE

GREAT events in history have always had a profound effect on the development of religious as well as philosophical thought; and there can be no doubt that the present war, which is shaking the fabric of modern civilisation to its foundations, will issue in many as yet undreamt-of changes of perspective and emphasis in Theology. It is too soon to forecast the issue in many directions; but already many pressing problems are demanding fresh treatment. Among these none is more urgent than the question of human destiny in the world to come.

Among the reasons for the decay of the influence of the Christian pulpit during the past generation, one is undoubtedly the fact that the doctrine of immortality has so largely lost its place at the heart of the Christian message. Preachers nowadays do not concern themselves so much with what happens after death as with what happens to us here and now. The pains of Hell, the bliss of Heaven, the penalties and rewards which await us in the Unseen, have largely disappeared from amongst the incentives and warnings of the religious life, nor have any other taken their place. Life is dealt with as though it found its sanctions, rewards and punishments within the circle of our earthly experience, and needed no future life to round off its incompleteness,

and bring its tremendous issues to fruition. This may be a healthy revulsion from the exaggerated "other-worldliness" of our forefathers, but it places the Christian preacher in a curious and anomalous position if pushed to extremes. For the emphasis now placed on the Apocalyptic element in our Lord's teaching has once more made the "otherworldly" aspect of religion a central part of its message; and if the future life is to be left out of the preacher's programme, it means that he is called upon to urge his hearers to such a temper on the basis of considerations that have no relevance except to the life that now is. Such a phase of thought is Hebrew, not Christian, and was already outgrown when the Book of Job was written. Morality may conceivably be justified, after a fashion, on the basis of one world. Religion unquestionably demands two.

We believe that the true reason for this neglect is the chaotic condition to which the doctrine of the future life has been reduced by the inevitable movements of thought. The old beliefs have grown impossible, both exegetically and spiritually. Say what we will, the crude division of the race into the "saved" and the "lost," with no great indeterminate class between, no longer appeals to anyone as true; the timeworn appeals to the hearer based on that ground make no impression on the mind. The same is true of the literalistic interpretations given to the eschatological parables of our Lord, and to the pictures of doom in the Epistles and the Revelation of John. These no longer either frighten or inspire. It is instinctively felt that there is something unreal in the business. But so far no more believable doctrine of future destiny has taken their place. We

seem to be living eschatalogically between two worlds, "one dead, the other powerless to be born."

The time has come when a fresh start may be made in the preaching of a truly evangelical and believable doctrine of the Last Things. This is due largely to the noble band of scholars who have recently recovered for us the true historical perspective of the revelation of the Life to Come in the Scriptures through the study of the Apocalyptic literature which fills the gap between the two Testaments. This has enabled us to realise how and why the Gospel has come down to us in the particular form which it took, and thus to distinguish between its historical integument and its essential message. The same historical method enables us to see that there are many questions relating to the Unseen World which were not so much as thought of when the New Testament was written, and which therefore find no place there. For reasons comprehensible to the student of history, but which we need not enter into here, many of these questions seem never to have become living problems for faith till our own day. Take for instance the frightful loss of precious life in this inhuman war, which has brought bereavement already into millions of homes. What has become of these brave men, cut off in the flower of their age, and who have all died for others? It is scarcely to the point to urge that this is no new perplexity; that death in battle is no new fact; that war and sudden death have been ubiquitous elements in human experience from the beginning; that the problem of what has become of those suddenly cut off by war is as old as humanity. These are commonplaces. The time has come, however, when the old solution no longer

satisfies the mind and heart of humanity; something in us which we cannot stifle rises in protest against it. To pass by the question therefore in silence, or to utter a few platitudes about it whose meaning has long lost their force, is to be guilty of cruelty as well as negligence; and it is no wonder that many aching hearts, anxious for what light there is, but hearing nothing to the point on a question that gives them untold secret agony, take refuge in a stony agnosticism, and often cease attending public worship altogether.

These considerations give the clue to the particular purpose of this book. It has no novel doctrine of destiny to propound; but it strives to clear the ground of the silt and rubble of non-essential beliefs concerning human life beyond the grave which have come down with the stream of time, and which even to-day make it difficult to construct a purely Christian doctrine of the Future Life—by which we mean one that flows centrally from the revelation of God's Holy Fatherhood, and of all men's potential Sonship in Jesus Christ. Great emphasis has been laid in the text on the doctrine of Future Probation as a corollary of these two determinative doctrines. Few now maintain the traditional position that death automatically determines the destiny of every man; but there are few who frankly face the real alternative to that crude and inhuman belief.

The writer begs to make his acknowledgments to the following writers: to Professor McDougall for his thorough and able book on *Body and Mind*, which has been largely drawn upon in the text; to Professor Charles, who has done so much suggestive work in unfolding the significance of the Apocalyptic literature

which bridges the gap between the Old and New Testaments, and in helping us to distinguish the essence of the Christian doctrine of Eschatology from its first historic integument (*A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, and *Between the Testaments*); to Professor Salmond for his masterly treatment of the subject from the older standpoint (*The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*); to Professor Adams Brown (*The Christian Hope*); and to Professor H. R. Mackintosh, for some helpful hints in his fine little volume, full of spiritual insight, on *Immortality and the Future*. Other more occasional sources of indebtedness are referred to in the footnotes.

It may be useful to point out that the main positions developed more at length in this book were first presented in the form of lectures to a post-collegiate class for ministers in the spring term of this year. The writer owes much to the very useful discussions which followed these lectures, and to the criticisms to which they were then subjected. But for the encouragement of his brethren he would scarcely have had the boldness to challenge the wider audience here addressed.

The writer's warm thanks are due to his colleagues, Dr. Grieve and Professor Price, for their help in revising proofs, in drawing up the indices and the analysis of contents, and in seeing the work through the press.

E. GRIFFITH-JONES.

The United College,
Bradford,
*September*, 1916.

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"Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!
Away, O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
Have we not darkened and dazed ourselves with books long enough?
Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me:
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves, and all.
O my brave soul!
O, farther, farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
O, farther, farther sail!"

WALT WHITMAN.

# FAITH AND IMMORTALITY

## INTRODUCTION

" There's none of these so lonely and poor of old
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene,
That men call age, and those who would have been
Their sons, they gave their immortality."

RUPERT BROOKE.

### I

THE great world-war of 1914 has brought to pass, among other colossal evils, an unparalleled mortality among the rising generation of European nations. Already several millions of the ablest-bodied, most adventurous-spirited and eager-hearted of our young men have been hurled into a premature grave through the gateway of a violent death. In the ordinary course of nature the vast majority of these men would have lived many years, and would have done useful service in their day and generation. Some would have attained to influence and fame; a few would doubtless have touched the high-watermark of genius in their respective callings and professions; and the names of not a few would have gone down to posterity as among the benefactors of mankind.

Even in the early months of the year 1915, an article appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, from the pen of Rev.

Herbert W. Horwill, detailing some of the cost to humanity which the first six months of the war had caused. Within so short a period irreparable gaps had already been made in the ranks of rising scientists, artists, musicians, and thinkers, among the belligerent nations. One of the first German soldiers killed in the war was Dr. Bertheim, who, with Dr. Ehrlich, was the discoverer of salvarsan, one of the most potent remedies known to medicine. Of a distinguished young English doctor, serving as a Red Cross surgeon at the front, it was written in a newspaper, "Had his life been spared there is no height in his profession to which he might not have attained"; of another, that an essay with which he won the prize at the London Hospital "was regarded as an earnest of a steady outflow of original work in the future"; and of a third, who received the V.C. for bravery in attending the wounded under fire, that he "had been investigating the problem of sleeping sickness in Africa, and was hoping soon to bring his work in it to a practical conclusion." Among distinguished Germans, early newspaper paragraphs contained the following array of men of varied ability and usefulness—Professor Hermann Kriegsmann of Tübingen, a leading authority on criminal law; the jurist Carl Kornmann, who had recently been appointed to a full chair at Leipzig; Dr. Heinrich Hermelink, Professor of Church History at Kiel; Dr. Ernst Heidrich, Professor of the History of Art at Basel; Dr. Ernst Sadler (a B.Litt. of Oxford), Professor of German Philosophy at Strassburg; Dr. Maxmilian Reinganum, Extraordinary Professor of Physics at Freiburg; and many other leading thinkers and writers in their respec-

tive departments of learning. Among well-known and rising Frenchmen the names of the following were already numbered among the fallen: Emile Raymond, a senator and surgeon of distinction; Joseph Dechelehe, a leading writer on archæology; Paul Philippe Cret, Professor of architectural design at the University of Pennsylvania; Charles Peguy, the leader of a new school in French poetry and criticism, and his brilliant disciple, Ernest Pischari; Alfred Druin, another writer of distinction; and Alberic Maguard, who had already produced music pronounced to be among the best works for wind instruments since Mozart's time. It would be possible by this time to add a melancholy list of names of young men of almost equal distinction drawn from the casualty lists of all the nations engaged in this fratricidal war. Of the 20,000 French priests enrolled in the army, how many have by this time paid the penalty of their heroism with their lives! And if, so far, our own losses have been less appalling, the casualty lists already contain not a few promising and some distinguished names among our young men; and as the voluntary army which has been slowly gathering its units from every class of society, and especially from our universities and public schools, moves into the firing-line, we are increasingly finding our own national life being bled of its most promising elements. We must add to the list of the dead who have already given a good account of themselves in definite directions, those others as yet too young to show their mettle in any channel of national service. If Gray's *Elegy*, with its pathetic references of "mute inglorious Miltons" who have died before their genius had opportunity to mature

had so much significance though suggested by a quiet country churchyard, what of the vast cemeteries that lie along the 1,500 miles of trenches in the east and west, the south and south-east of this appalling battle-line? We shall never know what poets and mystics, what scientists and philosophers, what prophets and preachers of the days to come have "fallen on sleep" before their time owing to this devastating struggle. Alas for the silent army of men who if they had had their chance to come to their own would have been the singers, orators, political leaders, philosophers, scientific thinkers, artists, saints of the coming days! We shall never know what we have lost.

And what of that vaster multitude of ordinary men who have fallen, who would have been their followers—the common humanity which is after all the most important because the most numerous section of the human race—the fathers and citizens, artists and artizans, workers in trade, business and the professions, who make up the average mass of our population? They were already doing useful work, at least most of them, and others were in the years of their novitiate. Many of them had formed their relationships in life, and some were knit into the organic fabric of society in a hundred different ways. They were already dear to some one, every man of them. Rivers of tears are flowing for them in obscure homes in city, town, hamlet, countryside in many lands; hearts are breaking—the hearts of mothers, fathers, sisters, lovers, wives: with their passing, the light has gone out of many a life, and the joy out of innumerable homes. The spectacular tragedy of the fighting-line, brutal and bloody as it may be, is in a

true sense less awful than the far-flung silent tragedy of these desolate and impoverished households scattered through the lands of Europe. So much love cheated of its joy, so much hope shorn of its brightness, so many years of loving sacrifice for the training, education, equipment for life of these lost sons of the race—all apparently in vain! The horrible wastefulness of war in money, treasure, commodities, institutions, stored up through the thrift of generations of industry and self-discipline—what is it compared with the waste of precious, promising, unfolding *life*, which it involves? This world of ours will be a poor world in many ways, as we shall find when we sit down in the first sad days of peace to count our losses; and its most sorrowful loss will not be its maimed and halting civilisation, but its missing legions of brawny, brainy, high-spirited young men, who will be lying silent beneath the sod ere ever they had their opportunity of proving their full worth in their appointed work, and of living out their normal day of effort and achievement.

## II

The question inevitably presses home upon us in view of these facts, What has become of all these unrealised and prematurely ended lives? Have they been "cast as rubbish to the void"? Are they gone out, like flames that flared up bravely only to fade suddenly into darkness? If not, where are they? What is their future, their fate, their destiny in the Silent Land into which they have so suddenly disappeared?

It may be said, these are no new questions, pertinent

only to such a time as this. This war is not the first in history (may it be the last!), but the latest in a long series of sanguinary struggles which have incarnadined the pages of human history from the beginning, all of which have drunk deep of the blood of youth and manhood. And even in times of peace we have had to bemoan the loss of many young lives prematurely cut off before their prime. Death comes to men at any age and has no respect of persons. And whenever it strikes young and promising souls to earth, these questions recur, and clamour for some kind of answer. There is nothing new under the sun—least of all in the spectacle of life cut short in its early morning, or its brilliant noon, as well as its quiet evening.

There are, however, certain aspects of the vast holocaust of young lives sacrificed on the altar of this wasteful war which make us ask such questions with a more poignant insistence than ever before.

1. There is first the *scale of the tragedy*. There has never been a war on a front so vast; never one fought with such pitiless severity and indifference to life; never one in which the proportion of fallen has been so high; never one whose cost in life will be so disproportionate to any probable benefits to be afterwards reaped. The biggest battles of the past have lasted at best but a few days, whereas this war is a continuous battle that has been already (October, 1916) protracted without any real pause or intermission, night or day, well over its second year. Other wars have slain their thousands, this war its millions. Such colossal waste of human life has never been so much as dreamt of by the most bloodthirsty conquerors of the past. And though this is an aspect of our enigma

that appeals to the imagination rather than the reason, which recognises no difference in kind between the problems of a skirmish and those of a campaign, yet—nay, because of, that very fact, it drives its spearhead deeper into our consciousness, and calls more loudly for an answer.

2. Secondly, these lost lives, let us repeat, have died a *sacrificial death* in a very real and special sense. Speaking only of our own lost sons, they have fallen on the field of battle in order to preserve for us all that is precious in the heritage of the past, all that is noble in the possession of to-day, all that is promising in the future for our nation, and for the world at large. They went forth, consciously, into battle—the vast majority of them—to "make the bounds of freedom wider yet," and to establish righteousness on the earth. Is it unnatural, is it not inevitable, that we should ask whether the fruit of their anguish is to be only for those who survive, and for those who shall come after? Is there to be for these men no element of compensation for the good they were instrumental in winning, no share in the Beyond in the benefits which they have died to purchase for us Here? Is it enough for those who go into battle only to die, to pray with the speaker in George Eliot's poem, *The Spanish Gipsy:*

> "O may I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence; live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> Of miserable aims that end in self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge man's search
> To vaster issues?"

That fine aspiration, I confess, has never seemed to me to satisfy the conditions and intuitions of human personality. It is not adequate to the scale of our nature or the sacred rights of our self-hood. Rather do I feel that Tennyson has come nearer to the heart of things when he voices the aspiration of each soul sacrificed for great ends, that it should, somehow, somewhere (since it is never mere material for other ends, but an inalienable end in itself) have its own share of the good it has helped to win for others, and enjoy at last its own conscious share of good in the onward march of things.

> "Glory of virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong!
> Nay, but she aimed not at glory—no lover of glory, she.
> Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.
> She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
> To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky,
> *Give her the wages of going on, and not to die!*"

When therefore we contemplate this moving vision of young lives hurried out of this world in the era not of attainment, but of promise; cut off in their prime, with their possibilities unfulfilled, their experience of life incomplete, their destinies unfinished: we are constrained to ask, with special emphasis, if they are all gone out of existence, What sort of a universe is this proved to be? If we are to think of the longest life that has ever been lived on earth, that it is ludicrously inadequate for the realisation of the resources of human personality, what of these lives thus nipped in the bud? Are we not forced to believe that if there be a God at all, and if supremely He be such an One as we can describe as the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," then for these young men the too brief span of life they have

enjoyed here cannot be their all. They were surely made for more and higher experiences than they here enjoyed, and He who implanted in them the thirst for life that fills all young hearts will not disappoint them of their instinctive longing for more and fuller life in the Beyond. Else is this world a medley of loose ends indeed, a prologue with no drama to follow, a futile and mocking farce "full of sound and fury" (as Macbeth puts it) "signifying nothing!"

And there is something in the very thought of a great sacrifice for others, when carried to the point of surrendering life itself for the common good, that proclaims the deathless nature of such souls as are capable of it. We cannot, after the fashion of Mohammedanism, claim that the very act of death on the battlefield is in itself a guarantee of everlasting bliss. The solemn issues of character are too complex and far reaching to be determined at the price of a single act, however supreme and glorious it may be. Life must be judged as a whole, and the judgment must be strictly qualitative; it must be searching and just as well as pitiful. It is, however, difficult to believe that because many of these men were spiritually immature, and some vicious, and a few vile, their eternal destiny has been suddenly and irrevocably fixed at the moment of such a death. No man could possibly damn to eternal perdition another who had given his life voluntarily for him; it is still more impossible to believe that the God whom Jesus revealed could do such a thing. We cannot perhaps pierce the veil that hides from us the world to come, but Faith as well as Hope has her anchor within that veil; and if the judgment bar before which our soldier-dead will have

to give an account of the deeds done in the body is that of Christ, it is the same Christ who preached of the Prodigal's return, and forgave sins, and redeemed the repentant sinner, even on the Cross. May we not be sure that the same love and righteousness, the same pity and grace, are to be found beyond the grave, as we have found on this side?

## III

Impressive, however, as these rapidly summarised suggestions may appear to be, they must not be taken for granted without a more sure proof than the eager intuitions of our better nature. It is not thus that our forefathers settled their problem of the Future. Bowing their very souls before the historic revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and finding in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, and more especially still in the *ipsissima verba* of the Master's teaching their material for the doctrine of destiny and doom, they were, sorrowfully enough doubtless, and with many a tendency to shrink back, yet none the less inevitably, led by their premises to the following conclusions: first, that death ends all probation for human souls; secondly, that it fixed finally and for ever their eternal destiny; and thirdly, that this destiny is determined by their conscious attitude in this life to the offer of salvation made in and through Jesus Christ. Unlimited hope for the worst sinner on this side of the grave; absolute fixity of condition and destiny for every soul according to its spiritual state "in the article and moment" of death—this is the faith which has come down to us from our Puritan forefathers, but from which most of us in this

generation have revolted with fear and trembling, if not with disgust and loathing. It is to be feared, however, that few of us have seriously faced the issues involved, or come to another conclusion along careful and cogent lines of thought. The subject of future destiny is at present in a state of confusion, if not of chaos. There is no reasoned theory of the Last Things in possession of the Christian consciousness. We are in this matter hovering between two worlds, "one dead, one powerless to be born." The crude, pragmatic view of heaven and hell, held fearfully but obstinately by our forefathers, has lost its hold on us. Most of us confess more or less frankly that we can no longer believe in it; others, seeing no alternative, and therefore perplexed and troubled in mind, have tried their best not to think about it at all; still others, even among Christian believers, are openly agnostic, and hold that we have no evidence whatever of what happens to the soul after death, and there they leave the matter.

All this is very unsatisfactory, if not mischievous to the interests of faith. The whole fabric of Christian thought in all generations down to the present has been built on the postulate of a future life, apart from which its teaching about *this* life would lose its consistency and its reasonableness. If once it were convincingly proved that death ends our existence, that in the words of the ancient preacher, "there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good so is the sinner . . . "[1] then we should have to revise our whole

[1] Eccles. ix. 2.

scheme of values, radically reconstruct our ethics, and change our life-programme from centre to circumference. True, many cling to the Christian ideal, and fashion their lives according to the laws and precepts of the Gospel, long after they have lost belief in the personality of God, the Divinity of Jesus, and the life everlasting; but this is a noble inconsistency, in virtue of which the standards of conduct survive the loss of creed. Some of the great Victorian Agnostics—men of the stamp of Huxley, Darwin, W. K. Clifford, Harrison—were thus conspicuously Christian in the tone and temper of their lives. It must, however, be borne in mind that their habitual springs of conduct had been irrevocably fixed ere they became Agnostic in religious belief, and could be logically justified only on the basis of the Faith in which they had been brought up before they had theoretically repudiated it. Such a position is not likely to be repeated in the second and third generations, as the history of families who have departed from the Faith abundantly proves. If therefore the doctrine of immortality is vital to the permanence and healthy activity of the Christian Faith, it is of the utmost importance that it should be restated in a way that shall command the happy consent of the intelligence as well as the heart of believing men and women. It is the aim of the present writer to attempt such a restatement in this volume.

Before such a task is attempted, however, certain preliminary questions must be dealt with. It has, for instance, been widely assumed that science has closed the door to the possibility of believing in the survival of the soul of bodily death. It is affirmed by a certain

school of Biblical critics that some of the passages in which Jesus seems to be dealing most directly with the life beyond have really no reference whatever to such a subject, but deal only with what must happen at the so-called "second coming" of the Son of Man. And it is affirmed by others that our Lord's teachings on this mysterious and difficult matter are so coloured and dominated by the current ideas of His time that they form no integral part of His revelation of God and Man in the future world. These and other problems must be as far as possible cleared out of our way before we can deal fruitfully with the central problem itself. We shall try to handle them frankly and reverently, with profound respect for all who differ from us in our conclusions, and with the single aim of easing the pathway of faith and of ministering to the comfort and strengthening of those of our fellow-countrymen who are filled with loving solicitude or painful uncertainty as to what the Christian Faith really teaches us concerning the fact and the conditions of the life "beyond the veil."

# PART I

# CRITICAL

## CHAPTER I

### THE ECLIPSE OF FAITH IN IMMORTALITY

## THE BLIND SUMMIT

"[A Viennese gentleman, who had climbed the Hoch-König without a guide, was found dead in a sitting posture near the summit, on which he had written ' It is cold, and clouds shut out the view.']

So climbs the child of ages of desire,
Man, up the steeps of thought, and would behold
Yet purer peaks, touched with unearthlier fire
In sudden prospect, virginally new;
But on the lone, last height he sighs ' 'Tis cold,
And clouds shut out the view.'

Ah, doom of mortals vexed with phantoms old,
Old phantoms that waylay us and pursue—
Weary of dreams—we think to see unfold
Th' eternal landscape of the Real and True;
And on our Pisgah can but write: ' 'Tis cold,
And clouds shut out the view.' "

WILLIAM WATSON.

" Guard the fire within!
Bright else and fast the stream of life may roll,
And no man may the other's hurt behold;
Yet each will have one anguish—his own soul
Which perishes of cold."

MATTHEW ARNOLD: *Progress.*

# CHAPTER I

## THE ECLIPSE OF FAITH IN IMMORTALITY

MANY writers have recently referred to the widespread waning of interest in the future life which characterises the present as contrasted with previous generations. The belief in immortality has unquestionably been rapidly losing its hold on all classes of society during the past half century. When those of us now in middle life were young, the question of our eternal destiny was a very live and burning one. It not only had a keen interest for the mind, but it exercised a profound influence on the will. Many of us remember how unfailingly, if a school-mate or personal friend died suddenly through sickness or accident, the occasion was improved by parent or pastor or Sunday-school teacher; how we were made to feel the uncertainty of life, the possible imminence of death at any age, the call to decision ere it was too late. Our friend, we were told, had gone to meet his God, and his eternal destiny was already settled according to his response towards the offer of salvation made to him during his brief opportunity on earth. Many can trace their conversion to the effect of the loss of a relative or companion in those far-off days in forcing them to decide the great question of their relation to Him who was to be their Judge as well as their Saviour. The writer well

remembers spending a whole night, when about eight years old, in anguished questioning as to what would become of him if he were suddenly called (as a classmate had just been called) "into eternity."

## I

How stands it to-day with the rising generation? Have we taught our children, as our parents taught us, the solemn issues of life and death? Is faith in an immortal life beyond the grave bedded into their consciousness, and made into one of the governing motives in all their doings and dealings? Early in the war a newspaper published a pathetic letter recently written by a Welsh lad to his parents in premonition of his probable death in battle, which was found on his dead body next day:

"My Dear Mam and Dad,—

"To-morrow I am to take part in a battle, and I have a strange presentiment that something is going to happen. Therefore I consider it a part of my honourable duty to write you a last letter. Should I lose my life in to-morrow's battle, my dear Mam and Dad, should I be one of those on the Roll of Honour, I want you to banish all grief or sorrow for me and keep up your heads as true British parents. Show those around you that you can share the sacrifice, and show that it is as much your duty as it is mine to face the enemy and, if needs be, to sacrifice my life.

"Dears, your boy cannot die a more glorious death than to fall with his face towards the enemy, and die with the secure consciousness that you, the parents he

loves, will be proud of him even in death. I shall die in peace. My only desire is that you will just smile upon me, and say, 'Well done!'

"Your ever loving old boy,

"TOM."

This is a beautiful and suggestive letter, full of filial affection, high-minded, artless and sincere. This lad was evidently profoundly religious; he had probably been brought up in a home where the natural affections mingled happily with the larger current of Divine grace. Yet in speaking of death there is no explicit reference to any hereafter. The faith is there, but it is implicit; there is no suggestion that the solemn issues involved were, as such, present to the writer's mind.[1] And we

[1] Since writing the above the writer has received other testimonies to the same effect. This position is corroborated also in the following extract from the *British Weekly*, May 11, 1916:

"A SOLDIER FACING DEATH.

"We have received the following very touching and significant letter from the father of the writer. The father wrote to his son in view of the rumoured advance and its dangers to our brave soldiers. The son was always a reticent lad, and the father writes us: 'This answer to my letter is so characteristic of the soldier lads that I thought you might like to see it and use it in your columns.' We are very glad to do so. We are confident that it expresses the deeper mind of the great majority of our soldiers.

"'B.E.F., FRANCE.

"'Your letter gave me much food for thought, and it touches on a topic about which a man is very loth to talk, though under the existing circumstances it concerns every one of us on active service very much. The greater part of every soldier's time he is in shelled areas, where death may come like a bolt from the blue. We realise this, say little about it, keeping such unwelcome subjects well in the background, and making the best of

cannot help believing that this letter is symptomatic of a great change that has passed over the religious world during the last thirty or forty years. We would not say that there has been any widespread loss of belief in survival after death in religious circles, but the moral value of the belief has been obscured, and as a consequence the belief itself has receded from the foreground to the background of life. I am not sure, indeed, that it would be wrong to say that it can now be best described as a vague hope rather than a confident faith full of moral urgency and spiritual stimulus.

Professor Mellone, in his very helpful book on *The Immortal Hope*, points out that "a shrinking from annihilation is distinctive and natural to humanity"; but Dr. Osler, in his "Ingersoll" lecture on "Science and Immortality," testifies strongly to the waning of the positive faith in survival in modern times. He divides modern men into three classes on this question—(1) "An immense majority who live practically uninfluenced by it, except in so far as it ministers to a whole-

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this extraordinary life. Personally, should anything happen, I am quite prepared, and do not mind what sacrifice is to be made. In the fortune of war it is to be or it is not to be, and lucky is the man who comes through intact. What worries the soldier most is not particularly his own welfare, but the feelings of those he has left behind him. Tommy's cheerfulness is of no artificial nature, and it often warms my heart to think that I am a Britisher when I see the conduct of our men under the most trying circumstances, and my only hope is that my own behaviour is worthy of my name and pedigree. "The one shall be taken and the other left." It is peculiar, but everyone thinks he will be a lucky one, your humble included.

"'I have not written in this strain before. In fact, I dislike doing so very much, but I thought you would like to know exactly what my views were.'"

sale dissonance between the inner and outer life, and diffuses an atmosphere of general insincerity." (2) A second group, larger perhaps, to-day than ever before in history, who put the supernatural altogether out of a man's life, and regard the hereafter as only one of the "many inventions" he has sought out for himself. (3) A third group, ever small and select, who lay hold with the anchor of faith upon eternal life as the controlling influence in this one.[1] And this, he suggests, is a diminishing class.

By way of testing these statements I have talked with many soldiers who have been to the Front, and questioned them as to the attitude of their comrades—and their own—to the possibility they are constantly facing of being suddenly called into the next world. Does such a possibility fill them with fear or apprehension? Nearly all the answers I have had have been disquietingly in the negative. The majority do not seem to think about it at all. They "know nothing about it"—such is the general attitude—and they just "take their chance." Probably this testimony is more agnostic than the real facts warrant. Young men nowadays are strangely and obstinately reticent as to their inner life. Except when the barriers of silence break down in rare moments of confidence with one another, they say nothing of what goes on in the secret chambers of imagery within. That does not mean that they do not think of these things; and probably they believe a great deal more than they publicly confess to each other, or—possibly—to themselves. While, however, we would not draw too definite a conclusion from such testimonies, we

[1] Pp. 16, 17.

still cannot but believe that the thought of a future life occupies a very much smaller place in the minds of the youthful generation than it did a generation ago. This personal impression is borne out by the systematised enquiries of some of our foremost thinkers. At the beginning of the present century a *questionnaire* was issued by the American branch of the Society for Psychical Research under the title *Human Sentiment with Regard to a Future Life.* Out of the 3,321 replies received, 22 per cent. alone answered affirmatively the second enquiry on the list—"Do you desire a future life whatever the conditions may be?"—suggesting (if the replies may be taken as fairly representative of average human opinion) that only one person in five would be willing to begin another state of existence under the "fighting conditions" of the present state. But the most significant question was the third in the list—"Do you feel the question of a future life to be of urgent importance to your mental comfort?"—and to this 1,807 persons answered categorically in the negative, "adding (often decidedly), 'Not at all,' 'Not in the least,' 'Never think about it,'" 1,314 (a little more than 33 per cent.) replying in the affirmative. Dr. Schiller apparently considers this response to be fairly representative of the general situation, and thinks it indicates that the actual interest taken in a future life is incommensurate with its spiritual importance, and that the question does not loom so large on our mental horizon as tradition has assumed. "The apparent absence of any widespread spiritual distress is certainly very striking and surprising, though here again this might perhaps have been inferred from the surface indications

of general placidity and contentment,"[1] and Professor Schiller apparently believes this state of things to be suggestive of the permanent attitude in all ages of men and women towards the future life. This may be so as regards the "irreligious" classes in every generation, but what is peculiar to the present time is that the thought

[1] Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, October, 1904, pp. 416-453. Professor Schiller's results, however, are not borne out by the evidence deduced from the long correspondence about the same time in the *Daily Telegraph* on the subject "Do we Believe?" which was summarised thus by the editor of that paper at the close of the discussion:

"I should imagine that so far as this correspondence reflects the mind of the English people, the believers must be ten or twelve times as numerous as the doubters, and this, too, in an age which has evidently been too rashly styled a sceptical one. So far as my original question is concerned I maintain that no one who looks at existing conditions can fail to observe that the majority of men, so far from thinking of another world, are quite content to limit their ambitions and desires to the present. Perhaps even the official teachers of religion have somewhat shifted their ground on this matter. I am told that the clergymen preach a good deal more of the duties of our mortal sphere and our every-day obligations to our neighbours, of the tasks which a human being of threescore and ten years has to accomplish, than their predecessors did half a century ago. In my youth the topics of most sermons were the happy conditions of the blest, the miserable conditions of the damned, the constant assertion that this world was a vale of tears. If the prospect is now changed, if by tacit consent we have put away from our thoughts the possibility of another sphere of existence, the reason is probably not so much concerned with the Christian religion as with the progress of rationalism and the dictates of philosophic moralists. Or perhaps it would be true to say that a good many moral teachers—Socrates, Buddha, and even Christ—often show themselves anxious to repress speculations about the future, in order that the duties of the present may be properly discharged. Other-worldliness is therefore at a discount."

of another existence beyond the grave has receded from the foreground of consciousness in the case of religious people as well. It is no longer one of the dominating, determining motives of conduct. It has become a vague sentiment rather than an operative and inspiring creed.

## II

Is it possible to account for this general and rapid loss of vitality in a doctrine which has hitherto been one of the prime postulates of Christian thought from the beginning? Amid all the changes and modifications of the Christian creed this particular tenet has never before lost its place among the operative beliefs of Christendom, though the forms in which it has been held have varied greatly in different ages and among the various Churches and sects. Yet within the last half century it has been steadily waning in all civilised countries; our own indeed is but the last to fall under influences which in France and Germany have for a much longer time been sapping at the foundation of the belief.

It is very difficult to account adequately for such phenomena, though many superficial reasons, cogent so far as they go, but not penetrating very deeply into the subsoil of the spiritual life, can be adduced for them. The conditions governing the rise and decadence of religious beliefs have never been thoroughly studied; here indeed is a chapter in spiritual psychology not yet written. There are clearly hidden factors at work.

> "We cannot kindle when we will
> The fire which in the heart resides;
> The spirit bloweth and is still,
> In mystery our soul abides."

There are ages in which certain doctrines previously neglected, or lying on the circumference of consciousness, suddenly become central and all-dominating; fierce controversies range round them; their acceptance or rejection is made a matter of prime spiritual importance; prison, boot and thumb screw are brought into requisition, and men cheerfully burn each other to death according to their attitude towards tenets which to after ages become matters of mild indifference, even of amused curiosity. Of many of these ages of controversy we may say that they mark organic stages in the history of dogma, which, having once been passed, determine the settled faith of the Church for all time; but this is by no means true of all. It is quite impossible for us to enter into the points of view of belligerent theologians who once fiercely wrestled in historic councils over what appear to us as matters of no vital importance to anyone. All we can say is that the issues once so vividly alive are dead for ever; we are interested in other and what seem to us to be more important things—which possibly to posterity may appear to be equally trivial and evanescent.

This, however, can scarcely be said of the belief in question. The problem "if a man die, shall he live again?" is no passing craze: it touches the very fountains of life itself; and that such a belief should ever become a matter of final indifference or even of minor import to creatures whose master-passion is an inordinate love of life and hatred of extinction, is surely one of the wonders of religious psychology. Such a state of mind can hardly be permanent; and the pressure of loss upon the world's thoughts and affections caused by the

devastations of this colossal war will probably—as one of its incidental effects—bring back in a new and vital sense the desire to come to a more intelligent and settled conviction on the great question whether death is the end of all, and, if not, what is the nature, and what are the conditions, of the life beyond.

## III

It will, however, not be unfruitful to consider some of the more obvious conditions of thought which have contributed to the eclipse of this faith during the last half century in the history of English thought.

1. It has been *freely stated that the belief in immortality has been finally disposed of by science.* In the first place, the Copernican astronomy has so altered the position of the earth in the starry system, reducing it from the centre of creation to a mere outlying pin-point in space, unsymmetrically placed even as to its own solar centre; and the theory of evolution has stretched so inconceivably the pathway of time and the story of terrestrial life, that for one insignificant order of creatures in so spacious a universe, and belonging to so interminable a life-series, to claim survival after death in a higher state of existence is to exaggerate our self-importance to the point of absurdity. Next, the science of psycho-physics (which deals with the relation of body and mind) has emphasised the close connection of these two aspects of our complex existence to such an extent as to make it difficult to believe that the mental factor is capable of survival apart from the other. Thirdly, the study of abnormal psychical phenomena has tended to resolve the "indissoluble unit

of the personality" (which is the final argument of the believing philosopher in favour of survival) into a mere bundle of "selves" which fall into hopeless separateness when the conserving bond of our normal psychological conditions is slackened or broken by mental and organic disease; which strongly suggests that when death puts an end to the organism there is no central self left to survive. There are many variants to the above negative arguments against the doctrine of immortality, but these are the main lines of attack. The net result has been a far-reaching influence in breaking down what in earlier generations was an unquestioned religious and moral postulate, that the most precious and significant element in human nature, the "soul" or "spirit," is essentially immortal.

2. The traditional belief was also *attacked in flank*, as it were, *from the religious standpoint*, by a large group of theological and critical writers who challenged the old belief that the soul's eternal destiny was settled irrevocably at death; some, like Rev. Edward White, Professor Petavel-Oliff, Dr. Dale, and Prebendary Row, affirming the doctrine of Conditional Immortality; others, like Rev. Baldwin Brown, Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, Rev. G. A. Gordon and a number of American Universalists, reinterpreting our Lord's parables of Judgment in the interests of the theory of Universal Restoration, or the Larger Hope; while, from the ultra-orthodox point of view, we have had a host of heterogeneous theorists, Pre- and Post-Millenarians, Latter-Day Saints, Second Adventists, aggravating the confusion of tongues, and introducing a sense of chaos into the general mind as to whether there is any

authoritative or even recognisable Christian doctrine on the subject at all. This state of things was brought to a climax by the rise of the Eschatological School of thought which claims to have revolutionised the interpretation of our Lord's teaching concerning the Last Things, contending that most of it was apocalyptic in character, and that none of the Judgment parables, etc., have primarily anything to do with the problem of immortality as such, being spoken of what would happen not at the moment of death or in the Great Hereafter, but at the Second Coming of the Son of Man, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Science and theology during the last quarter of a century have thus co-operated from different points of view in disturbing the sure foundations of the earlier belief in a future state; the first by making it difficult to believe that the "soul" can survive the body, or whether there was a "soul" to survive at all; and the second by bringing the scriptural evidence as to what follows death into uttermost disorder and confusion. It is no wonder that in face of these contrary winds of doctrine the light began to flicker and burn dimly on the altar of the Immortal Hope.

3. Meanwhile, *other interests of an absorbing kind appealed to the sensibilities of civilised mankind.* Nothing has created a more vivid revulsion from the traditional view of this life as a mere preface to the life to come, than the transformation in our earthly environment created by the discoveries of science. Our forefathers spoke of this life as a pilgrimage to another, spent in an alien and unfriendly world, beset with much uncertainty, misfortune, calamity, and manifold sorrow,

to be borne with such patience as we could command, and from which death—if a man lived in the fear of God —was a kindly deliverer. How profoundly this view of our terrestrial life had penetrated into the religious consciousness of the world is abundantly testified by our hymnology down to quite recent times. Puritanism had killed the *joie de vivre* of primitive and later times; a sombre veil was drawn over the natural sources of happiness; the world was "a dreary wilderness," a "vale of tears," a brief and painful passage from birth to the emancipating gateway of death. True, this depressing theory of existence never quite succeeded in killing the native springs of happiness in human nature; but it succeeded in making men almost ashamed of their joys and pleasures, by setting a ban on the instinct for enjoyment, and pointing with everwarning finger to the shallowness and evanescence of earthly sources of satisfaction. The wonderful extension of human power over the outward conditions of life during the nineteenth century gradually dispelled the dreary and unreal shadow which thus checked the natural impulse of the heart to make the best of this life. The object of the secularist civilisation of the nineteenth century (as the writer has pointed out in a recent volume) was to improve this planet as a home for man, so that he might spend his few years of existence on it to the best advantage. "Having discovered the secret of knowledge, and of the control of the physical forces, the so-called progressive peoples have been gradually mastering many devices for emancipating the race from its long-inherited ills and disabilities. Matter has gradually grown plastic under the hand of the chemist and the physicist. Inven-

tion has elaborated machines for the manufacture of countless contrivances which minister to the bodily comfort, the social convenience, and the political expansion of human society. . . . Commerce and intercourse have become worldwide; wealth, fabulous in amount, and exhaustless in prospect, has accumulated at an ever-increasing rate; even poverty has become a problem nearing solution if only men could be got to consent to the better distribution of the wealth which all have helped to make. There has thus seemed to be no reason on the surface of things why this earth, which has been the theatre of man's severe struggles to make it a tolerable dwelling-place, should not presently become a very desirable residence for a race bent on making the best of their brief opportunity."[1]

One of the results of this marvellous conquest of life's environment in the interests of humanity has been to shift the centre of interest from the Life Beyond to that which now is. The resources of our present existence have unfolded in a magical way; privileges formerly enjoyed by the few are now enjoyed by the many; it may be said without exaggeration that the lot of the poor man to-day is far richer in sources of satisfaction, in wealth of experience, in possibilities of expansion, than was the case with the richest classes a century ago. To those bent on physical enjoyment, even a moderate wage furnishes enough margin of purchasing power to enable them to enjoy a modicum of the pleasures of the drama, the cinema, the race-course, the holiday to the seaside, not to speak of the coarser

[1] *The Challenge of Christianity to a World at War*, pp. 35, 37.

joys of eating and drinking to repletion. For the intellectual, all the wonderland of literature has been made accessible through the public library and the cheap press. To the ambitious, facilities of self-education are many and easily accessible, and manifold avenues of social improvement and business success have been opened up to the able and determined spirit. For those whose "nature is touched to fine issues" pathways of practical service for their fellow-men are many and full of opportunity and promise. And for those who are natural idealists, and possessed by an altruistic passion of the highest kind, there are countless chances of self-forgetful activity through which they can assuage their longing to immolate themselves for the unfortunate, the down-trodden, the sinful and the lapsed, whether in the interests of the living, or of future ages. Contrast this with the narrow and pent-up lives of our forefathers who, with all their instincts for expansion, and self-realisation and service, were caged-in by cramping limitations, and condemned for the most part to a round of monotonous duties from which there was little opportunity of escape or even of variation. Is it any wonder that *they* could not help viewing their earthly lot as a kind of prison-house, from which death would presently emancipate them, that their souls might escape into a more congenial and adequate spiritual environment? And is it any wonder that *we*, to whom emancipation has so largely come in this life, should, at least for the time, tend to lose interest in a problematical life to come, and concentrate our thoughts and energies on the wonderful possibilities of our present stage of existence? Here at least is a world full

of immediate resources, both for enjoyment and for achievement; let us make the best of it, and extract all its sweetness and its joy; let us not neglect any of its "chances and glances," but from each passing day snatch the fruit it bears, ere it is too late. Thus in the absorbing interest of this life the potential joys of the next have been almost forgotten. "One world at a time, Sir," as Thoreau said to one who was asking him if he had made due preparation for the other; in which retort he concentrated the very essence of the spirit of his age and ours. *One world at a time*, we say; there will be time for the next when we have passed out of this "high-domed, blossoming" world, where the sunrises and the sunsets are so glamorous; where each day is so full of experience; where love, and energy, and thought are so richly operant, and from which we shall all too soon have to depart without having exhausted half its possibilities, or more than tasted of its nectar. This is the worldly attitude that has succeeded the "otherworldliness" of former ages, by one of those swift revulsions which have so often marked the history of human sentiment and thought. It is an exaggerated recoil, which has brought many heavy penalties in its train, and will lead, let us hope, to due penances by and by. None the less, so it is. Heaven has faded into the distance for the time, for we are living on a new and unfamiliar earth. Unhappily it is an earth which we have suddenly, in a fit of revulsion and madness, turned to a hell—perhaps because we were making so much more of its possibilities as an earthly Paradise. And this war is perhaps God's rough method, than which nothing milder would suffice, to rouse us to a

better sense of proportion and perspective, and to bring Heaven back from the far-removed distances once more within the horizons of thought and desire. If so, the stern medicine of war could not be administered to a better end.

## IV

For it is certain that a permanent loss of faith in a future life would have effects more disastrous to the true interests of humanity than even this terrible world-war with its train of horror and woe.

Even if it were proved to demonstration that the majority of mankind are consciously unaffected, and have never been other than unaffected, by a personal appeal to the immortal side of their being, it scarcely follows that it does not exercise through others a profound influence on their life and conduct. The standards of human conduct have always been determined not by the thoughtless many but by the thoughtful few. The real revolution would come to pass if the latter deliberately left out of count all reference to another world as the supplement and completion of this in their formulation of the principles of human conduct. And even though the many might be unconscious of such reference in their standards of virtue, there might still be a great deal of implicit faith operating in the subconscious background of their thoughts which would have a profound influence on their behaviour and their ideals. Most men believe much more than they *think* they do; and their practical outlook is often coloured by doctrines from which they believe themselves to be thoroughly emancipated. Thus, just as individual

Agnostics brought up under Christian influences frequently retain their early ideals (as we have already seen to be the case with certain prominent thinkers of the Victorian era), even though these ideals are quite inconsistent with their later postulates, so it would take a generation or two of unbelief to eliminate the effects of faith in the community at large. It has been calculated that it takes thirty or forty years for a change of view in philosophy or religion to percolate through the descending stratifications of thought and transform the standards of practical life. This law, according to which action always lags behind thought, should make us chary of estimating the effects to humanity of a radical loss of belief by its immediate results in conduct. It is only by a strong effort of imagination, and a long prophetic outlook, that the final issue can be realised.

1. Let us, therefore, in the first place try to picture what a world from which the last relics of belief in a future life had vanished would be like, and what standards of conduct it would be likely to formulate. If that belief disappeared it would carry away with it many others with which it has always been organically associated. We should have to give up the idea of a universe governed by a good and beneficent God. It is impossible to equate our deservings with our experience within the limits of the life that now is. Emerson's essay on Compensation, in which he formulates a theory of moral equivalence of this kind, strikes an optimistic note which is negatived by the conclusions of all the philosophies of the past, and which the experience of the modern world has done nothing to make more

plausible. The unequal distribution of life's favours and rewards is to-day even more glaring than in earlier and simpler times. At the best this law of equivalence is true in so general a sense that it can bring but little comfort to innumerable cases in which there is no correspondence whatever between desert and opportunity, between character and its full moral issues. The ancient problem raised by Habakkuk, and elaborated in Job, of the righteous nation or individual visited by misfortune and left to perish miserably, while the wicked spread their branches like a bay-tree, and the oppressor goes unpunished, would still be as unanswerable as ever if this life were proved to be all. Such a theory would at long last destroy faith in a just and beneficent Providence, and take the heart out of religion. The God whom Jesus preached would vanish from our spiritual horizon, and the Universe—to use Jean Paul Richter's vivid simile—would become an "eye-socket without an eye," a vast mausoleum into which all the higher values of life would lie buried for ever, with no hope of a better resurrection. With this faith would ultimately disappear the standards of conduct to which it has given birth, and we should have nothing to answer the man who would regulate his conduct by the short-sighted and selfish considerations which the worldly-minded have ever held to be alone reasonable and valid.

2. The same must be said of those well-meaning endeavours to ease the downward steps of faith in a future life by proposing certain alternative theories for the conservation of life's higher values. The first of these is that of *social immortality*, which proposes to concentrate human effort on the amelioration of our human

environment in this world in lieu of making our life here a preparation for another and better world. "If," say such writers, "we can no longer look forward to a world in which the inequalities of this life will be redressed, let us make this world a fit place to live in. Let us remove its preventable evils, equalise the conditions of life for all, and erect a new Jerusalem on earth instead of waiting for one beyond the skies." This is a noble and moving vision, and one that must appeal to every true lover of his kind. In so far as it quickens the process of social reform it is an altogether admirable programme. Such a substitute for faith in immortality, however, will not carry us very far. It is based on an illicit assumption—that it is in the power of mankind not only to modify, but so to transform its environment, as to do away with the inequalities of human lot. It also puts forth a theory of human nature which facts do not justify. The disabilities in question are not laid upon us by Nature, but mainly by "man's inhumanity to man," which is the chief barrier to reform, and the rock on which all reforms seem doomed to split. This theory also does not make provision for those who in the meantime are the victims of the present disorders of society, and who will never enter the promised land of social emancipation. And if, as science prophesies, there is no abiding city for humanity as a whole on this earth, and the time will come (it matters not that it may be at a very distant point) when the conditions which have made life possible will gradually disappear, and the world be resolved into its elements, what will become of this ideal social order for which humanity has been striving for so long? Finally, they are few

and far between who are willing to immolate themselves on behalf of a distant goal, however assured; and what of the vast multitudes without whose willing and unselfish co-operation alone this social ideal can be reached, who are incapable of large aims, and whose enthusiasm for altruistic ends is so fitful and easily discouraged?

3. The second substitute for immortality as a motive-power for goodness in this life is what is called the *immortality of influence.* "Enough," it is said, "if we ourselves must pass out of existence, that whatever of good may be in us survives in the lives of others 'made better by our presence' and is passed on through them to future generations." This, as already suggested, was the faith that inspired George Eliot, and it comforted many other noble souls in the last generation who had lost all hope of personal survival after death, such as J. Stuart Mill,[1] and in some measure Tenny-

[1] "It occurred to me," writes J. S. Mill in his *Autobiography* (p. 148), "to put the question directly to myself: suppose that all your objects in life were realised, that all the changes in institutions and nations which you are looking forward to could be completely effected at this very instant, would this be a great joy and happiness to you? And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, No! At this my heart sank within me, and the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. . . . I seemed to have nothing left to live for." He recovered from this mood by reading some of Wordsworth's poems through whom he discovered the world of value "to which poetry and religion alike held the key," which brought him "a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure which could be shared in by all human beings, which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physique or spiritual condition of mankind."

son.[1] It is the Positivist faith, which has been so finely expounded in England by Frederic Harrison. Browning gives it expression in *La Saisiaz:*

" We who, darkling, timed the day's birth, struggling, testified to peace—
Earned by dint of failure, triumph—we creative thought, must cease,
In created word, thought's echo, due to impulse long since sped!
Why repine? There's some one living, although we ourselves be dead!"

But Browning's sense of the rights of personality is too rich and vivid to be satisfied with this form of immortality by proxy. There is a healthy but transfigured egoism in him which demands a share for each soul in the good it has created, and thinks eternity none too large a sphere for the realisation of its latent possibilities. His last word on this subject, which recurs again and again in his poetry, is his best:

" No, at noontide in the bustle of man's work-time,
Greet the Unseen with a cheer,
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
'Strive and thrive!' cry, 'Speed—fight on, fare ever
There as here!'"

And however true and quickening the thought that our influence can and does live on "in other lives"; however we may admire those noble souls who find in such a thought enough inspiration to a life of service for others; we may be sure that the permanent loss of faith in personal immortality would not only utterly dis-

[1] There is much in *In Memoriam* that gives colour to this idea, though there are passages in that poem which strike a higher and more confident note.

courage all but "fine spirits to fine issues touched," but would sap at their roots the courage and patience of the noble few who now labour and suffer and die in the interests of the race.

4. Still less are we likely to find a satisfying substitute for immortality in the theory of *eternal values* of which Professor Münsterberg is one of the leading apostles. By this is meant that every ideal has a value of its own, and independent of all outward or temporal conditions. Spiritual realities are independent of time, and find their justification in their own quality and worth. Our true relation to them is not reached till we eliminate the time-relation, and love and follow them for their own sakes. Speaking of the death of a friend whom he had greatly loved and admired in life, he writes: "The man we love was not in space and time. . . . He lived his life in realising absolute values through his devotion to truth and beauty, to morality and religion. You and I do not know a reality of which he is in eternity not a noble part. The passing of time cannot make his personality unreal, and nothing would be added to his immortal value if some object like him were to enter the sphere of time again."[1]

Here again we have a truth of real and permanent value; one indeed which is largely the fruit of that view of life which was brought fully for the first time within the horizon of human thought and affection by the Gospel, though there is much in Plato's teaching that is a true premonition of it. There is a timeless element in all moral as well as artistic excellence, an intrinsic value in spiritual realities such as justice, faith,

[1] *Eternal Life*, pp. 8-9.

hope, and love. But it is a false abstraction to deal with these qualities as though they had any existence in and for themselves. *They are all attributes of personality*, and though we are able to *think* of them as self-existing qualities, in an abstract way, this is a mere trick of the imagination. There is no such thing as love except in loving souls, no faith or hope but that which animates living hearts. If all personalities were suddenly to go out of existence, what would become of these beautiful sentiments and virtues? They would instantly cease to be. *The real world of values is the world of living spirits*, and it is altogether idle to speak of the qualities that make them admirable as having any existence apart from them. There are no immortal values, there is no world of values at all, apart from a world of immortal souls.

We are thus brought back from these secondary aspects of immortality to the primary fact which alone makes them real, and we affirm with confidence that when we strip them of their factitious attributes, they can be no substitute for faith in the life eternal. If that faith goes, all these will ultimately go, however we may for a time invest them with a quasi-independent validity. The light would ultimately fade away from the far horizons of life; and, in the deepening twilight that would follow, the clear distinction we now see between temporal and eternal values would be finally lost. The issue of this would be that only temporal values would remain, and life would be shorn of its true dignity and glory.

# CHAPTER II

## SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY—I

"All physical science is only a probability, and, what is more, one which we have no means whatever of measuring. It all rests on the assumption that the course of nature has been, is, and will continue to be, uniform. And yet, no one has ever been able to give any answer at all to the question, What proof have you that the uniformities which you call laws will not cease or alter to-morrow? In regard to this we are like a man rowing one way and looking another, steering his boat by keeping her stern in line with the objects behind him."—FITZJAMES STEPHEN.

## CHAPTER II

### SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY—I

"If the breath
Be Life itself, and not its task and tent,
O Man, thou vessel purposeless, unmeant,
Yet drone-hive strange of phantom purposes!"

COLERIDGE.

THE relations between Science and religious thought have been unsatisfactory from the beginning, and in no direction more so than in dealing with the question of the Future Life. This has long been a *postulate* for Religion, but it has ever been and still is a *problem* for Science. At the best we must allow that the affirmations of faith on this subject have received scant sympathy from most scientific thinkers; and if, on the whole, men have clung to the belief in a life beyond the grave, it has been in spite of a strong tendency to scepticism, if not to unbelief, on the part of those who represent the scientific spirit. Is there any valid reason for this discrepancy of attitude? It is my purpose in this chapter to show that there is none.

#### I

We shall best begin our way towards a safe conclusion on this subject by defining our terms.

What do we mean by Science? Strictly speaking it

means "ordered thought about phenomena, or the facts of the world as open to our observing and reasoning faculties." Its direct and proper purpose is to describe and classify the facts of the objective world, and of our own subjective experiences in that world. It takes these facts as given in experience, groups them under their appropriate headings, and then draws its conclusions. When it has done all this, it has fulfilled its function: there is no more that it can do. It explains nothing; it can account for nothing: it evaluates nothing. As soon as it goes beyond this, its proper function, it usurps the place belonging to other methods of dealing with the facts of experience. It trenches on the work of philosophy, or ethics, or religious thought. In a word, it becomes metaphysical, and then it ceases to be science in the proper sense of the term.

This, however, is what Science, as it has been handled by its representatives, has been doing more or less from the beginning. It has not been content with dealing with facts in their purely phenomenal aspects, but has been prone to work surreptitiously on an implicit theory of reality, and to deduce conclusions which are valid only on condition that that theory is true. This is so because no one can be a scientist pure and simple. Whether he knows it or not, every man proceeds on some particular theory of reality in dealing with the facts of experience—*i.e.*, he is implicitly a philosopher as well as a scientist, and his philosophy profoundly affects his scientific conclusions. Thus, every scientist is (tacitly or openly) a Materialist or a Spiritualist; a Monist, a Dualist, or a Pluralist; an Idealist or a Pragmatist; an Agnostic or a Theist; and he will handle the

facts of his particular science very differently according as he is the one or the other. It is practically impossible, indeed, for any of us completely to separate these two attitudes of mind (the scientific and the philosophical) in dealing with the facts of life; the one colours and affects the other, however impartial we may try to be. This is why such diverse religious conclusions are drawn from the same data by scientists like Huxley or Ernst Haeckel on the one side, and Clark Maxwell or Sir Oliver Lodge on the other. They are really working from totally different presuppositions as to the nature of ultimate reality—whether, *e.g.*, it is essentially "spiritual" or "material"—and these vitally affect their view of the significance and value of the phenomena in question. The man who believes, for instance, that mind is but a subtle phase of matter under certain highly organised conditions, will subordinate his religious intuitions and hopes to materialistic considerations, and will find no place for the notion that the soul is a real entity capable of continuing its existence when severed from the bodily organism which is its home in this life; while the thinker who believes that matter is but a manifestation of spirit under conditions of time and space will find no *a priori* difficulty in believing that the soul is immortal. The Pantheist, holding as he does the unitary spiritual nature of all reality, is prone to believe in the reabsorption of the soul into the universal divine essence at death; while the Theist is able to hold consistently to the faith that personality in man is capable of continued existence after death. It is clear therefore that until we know the philosophical position of a thinker we cannot judge of

the value of many of what he calls his "scientific" conclusions.

It may be well to state that our position in this book is frankly Theistic, and that we are writing not for Agnostics or Materialists, but for perplexed believers. And our business in this chapter is to show whether the ascertained facts of science concerning the relations of soul and body preclude the belief that when these are separated at death, the soul can consistently be conceived of as still existing in another state.

## II

It has been the natural or intuitive belief of mankind from earliest times that the living man differs from the corpse in the fact that his body "contains" a vital spiritual principle which determines its purposive movement, its growth and self-repair, and to which is due his capacity for sensation, thought, and feeling. This indwelling principle, in the language of every day, is called the *soul*, the *mind*, the *spirit*, or the *personality*, according to the angle from which it is viewed; but fundamentally the same thing is meant by all these terms. It always means that essential entity, not physical but spiritual in nature, which differentiates us as the living from the dead; and it has generally been held that this entity, while in this life intimately associated with the body as its temporary home or instrument, is capable of surviving the dissolution of the body.

How long has this belief been held by mankind? It is impossible to dogmatise on a subject concerning

which no records could in the nature of things survive. All that is certain is that long before the era of written language it was practically in universal possession of the field. We cannot find any relics of human life so ancient that they do not present traces of the belief in a future life—a fact which proves that in the prehistoric period the distinction between soul and body was already held in some dim sense, and also the separable relation of the two. *Non omnis moriar* ("not all of me shall die") might have been inscribed as a motto on the most ancient tombs yet discovered. Primitive man, everywhere, so far as we can discover traces of him, believed in the survival of the spirit over bodily death.

Many theories have been elaborated in recent times as to the mental condition in which such a belief was born. Modern Science professes to investigate the phenomena of religious belief with an open mind, and declines to pronounce on the objective validity of these phenomena—*i.e.*, its method is psychological rather than metaphysical. This is a sound position to take up—or would be if, when the investigation is completed, the question of validity were really left to be evaluated on its own proper grounds. It cannot however be denied that the work of those scientists who have been most active in this region has tended to undermine rather than establish the belief in the confidence of the modern man. This is so because the majority of the investigators seem to have started from the position, "Granted that this belief is an illusion, how can we account for the fact that primitive man came to such a belief?"—and this assumption has led to some very questionable theories. It would be well, however, to remember that

the origin of a belief is one thing and its truth another; in other words, *a truth may come home to the mind along the pathway of an illusion.* In such a case the illusion will pass with further enlightenment; while the truth remains, to be established finally on its own proper grounds.

It is important to bear in mind this *caveat* in dealing with our subject, in view of the fact that the prevailing theories as to the rise of the belief in a future life as a rule seek its basis in illusory ideas. We refer to the apparently widespread primitive beliefs that a man's soul was in a way identified with his *shadow*, or with his *breath.* Language bears testimony of these two facts, as is seen in such words as *manes* (or *shade*), *anima, animus, pneuma,* and *spirit*, all of which suggest the idea of *breath.* The ghost or soul of a man was thus conceived as an attenuated form or aspect of body. Not that the primitive man must be thought of as a materialist in the modern sense, for that he certainly was not, being essentially animistic in his conception of reality, and holding that every material body (even inanimate objects) had its corresponding ghost-soul. Professor Tylor[1] thus attempts to describe what the human ghost-soul must have meant for such a man. "It is a thin unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow; the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates; independently possessing the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner, past or present; capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place, mostly impalpable and invisible, yet also manifesting

[1] *Primitive Culture,* vol. i., p. 429 (third edition).

physical power, and especially appearing to men waking or asleep as a phantasm separate from the body to which it bears the likeness; continuing to exist and appear to man after the death of that body; able to enter into possession and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things." This, or something like it, was the conception of soul inherited from far-off times by all historic peoples till quite recently; we find traces of it in Homer and other Greek writers, in Virgil and Ovid, and in the Old Testament, down to the prophetic period, if not beyond. It was the Greek philosophers who first began to speculate on more intellectual and abstract lines as to the nature of the soul. Thales taught that water was the essential nature of things and therefore of the soul; Anaximenes that it was air; Heraclitus that it was fire; while Pythagoras returned to a more Animistic position, and conceived of the soul as the double of the visible body, of the nature of a "daemon," or godlike immortal being, fallen from its heavenly state and imprisoned in the body by way of punishment—a position assumed by Empedocles in a more mystical sense. We thus find at the very dawn of philosophy two separate lines of thought emerging, the one tending to merge the soul in the universal movement of matter, the other affirming for it a more independent and spiritual nature—a distinction which has passed through Plato and Aristotle down to modern times. Those who favoured the Naturalistic philosophy were the precursors (whole-heartedly through Democritus, the arch-materialist of ancient times) of the modern rationalistic school; those who through the Platonic philosophy formulated a psycho-physical

dualistic form of belief, continued the animistic or spiritual tradition. The popular mind of modern Europe has inherited much of the chaotic character of earlier beliefs on the nature of the soul, so that even to-day there is current among us almost every variety of opinion that foregoing ages have excogitated. Whether primitive man first came to a belief in the existence of the soul through the influence of dreams, the reappearance of ghosts, phantasms of the dead, the tendency to visualise absent or dead friends, or in some other way, that belief has persisted with a vigour that no scepticism seems able finally to destroy. And to believe in the existence of the soul as such has so far always meant faith in its survival of bodily death. It may indeed be said that unless irrefragable proof of the erroneousness of this faith can be brought forward, analogy would suggest that it will go on persisting in the future as in the past. True, there are reputable thinkers who "judge that this belief can only be kept alive if a proof of it, or at least a presumption in favour of it, can be furnished by the methods of empirical science."[1] But the conditions would probably be satisfied for most people with less than this—*i.e.*, if such ideas be finally prevalent as to the nature of soul and body, and of their relation to one another, as would put no impassable barrier to the faith that when the body dies the soul may still continue to exist.

It must, however, be confessed, as already pointed out, that the trend of "scientific" thought on its broader and more philosophical side during the last half-century has been distinctly, and, till quite recently,

[1] McDougall, *Body and Mind*, p. xiii.

increasingly hostile to faith in a future life; so much so that it has adversely affected religious faith in general. It is therefore of great importance that we should carefully review the position.

## III

The practical unsophisticated man thinks and acts on the assumption that his total being consists of an immaterial or spiritual "self" which is the seat of consciousness in its three forms of sensation, thought and will, on the one side; and on the other, of a bodily organism which through the special senses is the medium of communication and interaction between this "self" and the world of matter and of other persons like himself. The question, however, arises, What is the relation between these two entities of which he is the unity? As soon as men begin to reflect on this mystery, they divide up into very diverse schools of thought according as they conceive this relation to be (1) one of cause and effect, (2) of identity, (3) of interaction in the proper sense of the term. We must all take up one or other of these three positions. Let us briefly consider the arguments for and against each in turn.

1. *Is the Relation between Soul and Body one of Cause and Effect?* If so, two sub-alternatives present themselves—which is the cause, and which the effect? Is mind or soul the result of our bodily processes? This is affirmed by the physical school. Or is the body the result of the creative or formative activity of the soul? Such is the position taken up by the Vitalists.

The *Physicists* base their argument, either on empirical grounds—in which case they point to the evidence for

believing in the *dependence* of the mind on its bodily conditions—or on more abstract and *a priori* grounds which we will presently review. That there is the closest correspondence between our mental and physical life must be freely admitted by all. So far at least as *consciousness* is concerned, there is no room for doubt that it depends in this life on manifold conditions of bodily well-being, these conditions centring in the normal action of the brain-centres, to which *afferent* nerves carry the impressions made by the outside world or environment on the special organs of sense. We cannot see without the eye, or hear without the ear, or feel without our nerves of sensation. Again, we cannot move or act without the *efferent* nerves which carry back to the muscles the nervous impulses generated in the brain or other nerve centres. Our mental power grows with the development of the brain-structures during the years of childhood and early youth; it remains practically stationary during the years of adult manhood; and it gradually wanes with the onset of old age. In periods of health and vigour our mental condition is fresh and eager; when our bodily functions become deranged, we are oppressed with a sense of lassitude and inability; when death comes on us gradually or suddenly, our earthly conscious career comes to an end. All these facts have been familiar to every generation; it has always been so, and under present earthly conditions it will doubtless remain so. Were there no other considerations than these bearing on the subject we should inevitably be forced to conclude that the soul, whatever be its ultimate nature, is the result of certain highly organised combinations of matter, and

that when these conditions cease with the decay and death of the body, the soul simply goes out of existence with the dissolution of the organism that gave it birth.

Further reflection, however, shows a very obvious fallacy in such reasoning. Professor William James has pointed out that there are two or three other alternatives to belief in the causative relation between Body and Mind. It *may* be causative, as the above theory takes for granted. But supposing, for the sake of argument, that body and mind are two entities independent in origin, which come into close relation in our actual life on earth? And supposing that under certain strict physical conditions the body becomes fitted for the manifestation of the soul through sense and thought and impulse? Then, so long as the body fulfils these conditions, the soul will be able to receive impressions from the world of sense, and to react through the body on that world. And in such a case it would only be able to do so in strict accordance with the efficiency of the bodily structure for this purpose. A pane of glass is able to *transmit* the light of heaven into our dwellings, but it does not *create* the light which it lets through. The pull of a trigger releases the charge in a pistol by upsetting the balance of the forces imprisoned in the charge, but it does not *create* these forces. Thus, through co-operation and strict correspondence between certain organised forms of matter on the one side, and certain mental energies on the other, the same apparent results would appear as though the one were the cause of the other: and yet they might be independent in origin, and quite capable of existing apart under other conditions. There is therefore nothing in the close con-

nection of mind and brain, soul and body, which forces us to the conclusion that the physical fact is the cause of the mental. It may be simply the condition of the manifestation and activity of our souls on the plane of our earthly life.

But the physicist may proceed on more general lines of reasoning in order to arrive at his conclusion. Modern science has steadily extended the realm of physical uniformity over all natural phenomena, until the law of the conservation of energy has become if not an axiom, at least a postulate of all scientific thought; by which is meant that while the energy of the universe is manifold in form, and passes more or less freely from one form into another, its total amount is always a fixed quantity. Now, experiments of the most careful kind appear to uphold the conclusion that this law holds good of the human body as strictly as of any other form of matter, and that the energy-value of the heat, chemical products and movements of the body, equals the energy-value of the food and oxygen absorbed in nutrition. If so, it seems to follow that however the mind may *seem* to affect the body, it cannot really do so; otherwise it must be conceived as disturbing the perfect equivalence of the forces at work on the changes taking place in the nervous system. This, however, never takes place. On the other hand, the mind is confessedly affected by the condition and efficiency of the bodily functions. Thus many physicists have come to the conclusion that the mind is an inert result of the physical functions, which has no reciprocal effect on these functions, and is a mere by-product or *epiphenomenon*, as helpless to affect its material conditions as

the glancing light reflected from the broken surface of a wave is to affect the form or impetus of the wave as it breaks on the shore. This is the theory of the relation of body and mind which found wide vogue in the latter half of the nineteenth century, chiefly under the influence of Professors Tyndall and Huxley, the latter of whom gave it the name of *epiphenomenalism.*

The inherent defect in this theory, as held by many leading Evolutionists, is that it leaves the emergence of mind in the upward march of life an utterly unexplained mystery. If the circle of physical and vital processes is complete altogether apart from consciousness, and if our mental operations (which are essentially *purposeful* in character and aim at producing *results*) are of no use to our bodily processes, and unable to affect them in any way, *how came such a strange fact to be?* On such a theory, at a certain point in the course of evolution something unique and out of all relation to preceding results came into being, persisted through long ages, and came to final and wonderful maturity in man, which yet has never had any real function to fulfil in the vital process. This sins against one of the first postulates of scientific thought—the law that *nothing can persist in the world of reality which has no function to perform.* Again, the theory sins against the law of cause and effect: for here is an effect that has come to pass without subtracting anything from the cause, or reproducing, in another form, any of its energy; and this is absurd. When in addition we consider the fact that on any hypothesis the human mind is the highest entity in Nature—a kind of "final end" towards which all previous stages of the evolutionary process have been

directed—the mystery deepens. And, finally, we find it impossible practically to believe that, while bodily conditions do confessedly affect the state of the mind, our mental operations can never affect our body; that the *thought* of going to town, for instance, eventuating in the desire and *will* to go to town, is not the real operative cause of my bodily movements thither. Anyhow, we *act* on that assumption—epiphenomenalists as thoroughly as others—and it will probably be beyond the power of any philosopher to persuade the rest of the world that all this amounts to pure illusion. It is indeed needless to add anything to these remarks in refutation of the epiphenomenal theory of body and mind, for it has now been generally given up, and would probably never have had any real vogue but for the extraordinary authority wielded in the scientific world during the last generation by its chief exponents.

Let us, then, turn to the *Vitalist* position. Those who hold this theory claim that the facts of physiology bear witness to the presence in the body of a non-material energy of a teleological or purposive kind which builds up the body out of its physical materials, governs its functions, repairs its waste, and maintains the balance and efficiency of its processes from birth to death. When the anti-vitalist points out that all the particular reactions that take place in the body, and in the individual cells that compose it, are still either physical or chemical, the Vitalist makes no demur: but he asks by what physical or chemical means are we to account for the way in which these are built up with faultless faithfulness to type, and yet with peculiarities of structure and balance in each individual organism? It is

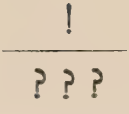
one of the universal laws of physics that all forms of mechanical energy are in a state of gradual dissipation (the material world is like a clock that is constantly running down). But in the living being there is a constant building up or *integration* of these forces (anabolism), which balance the physical tendency to dissipation (katabolism), and this goes on without pause so long as life continues. This curious influence or entity in the body is capable not only of securing the repair of injured parts, but even in certain cases (*i.e.*, that of Begonia) of rebuilding the whole organism out of a single cell. Again, the growth of an embryo suggests the presence of a teleological (mental) factor able to overcome obstacles placed in its path and comparable to the persistency of a creature to achieve its end (*i.e.*, the satisfaction of its needs) under the driving power of instinctive impulse or craving. This capacity to adapt itself to varying circumstances is a universal feature of life, and this by adjustments that are sometimes quite different from the normal. To call this power physical is to subsume under that title things that are totally different in kind—a process that tends to confusion rather than clearness of thought.

The recognition of this non-material directive and conserving power does not, however, mean that there is any breach in the continuity of the physical and chemical process in the living body. The Vitalist fully allows this continuity; what he claims is that the co-ordinating power is something different from the forces of physics, and yet capable of using them for its organic ends. And if there is such a power efficiently at work in the unconscious processes of bodily life, is

there any consistency in denying the conscious directive and controlling efficiency of mind over bodily movement? It seems impossible to account for the fact of organic life without some such non-material agency which is far more akin in nature to purposive action in the mental life than to a physical force. Those who would account for the behaviour of organisms on mechanical grounds are thus hard put to it, for there is nothing analogous to it in the mechanical realm. And how is it that at the moment of death all the vital processes suddenly cease, and the whole body rapidly disintegrates into its physical constituents? On the theory that the vital principle has ceased to hold together and control the physical processes, all is clear; but on the non-vitalist ground there is here an unexplained and baffling mystery, for all the chemical and mechanical reactions in the body still remain, only now they are disintegrative in character, as is the case with all material forces when left to themselves.

# CHAPTER III

## SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY—II



## ABRIDGED HISTORY OF TWO WORLDS

Interpretation :

"There are two Worlds—a Lower and a Higher, separated by the thinnest of partitions. The Lower World is the world of Questions; the Higher World is that of Answers. Endless doubt and unrest here Below; wondering, admiring, adoring certainty Above."—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES : *Over the Teacups*, p. 117.

## CHAPTER III

### SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY—II

"I am an acme of things accomplished,
And I an encloser of things to be."

WHITMAN.

### IV

WE now pass from the first to the second theory of the relation between body and mind—*i.e.*, that of their identity. This is held by various thinkers in three forms, which must be briefly described.

1. The first is not so much a theory of identity as of *crude parallelism*, which has been thus described: "According to this view, physical and psychical processes are equally real; but there is no causal connection between psychical and physical processes: the two series of events—the psychical processes of the mind and the physical processes of the brain with which they are associated—merely accompany one another in time: their relation is one of concomitance only; the two series of events merely run parallel to each other in time, as two railway trains run side by side on a double track, or two rows of light projected towards the same infinitely distant point run parallel with one another in time and space. Within each series the law of causation holds good, the successive steps being

related to the preceding and successive steps as effects and causes; but no causal links stretch across from one series to another."[1] This is the theory first formulated by Leibnitz. It is mentioned here only because it presents the most extreme attempt to express the invariable concomitance of the mental and physical processes of mind and being while denying their causal relation. This is done, however, at the expense of making the concomitance (which is conceded by every one) unintelligible. For, if these two processes are divided by an impassable chasm across which there are no bridges of connection, how comes it that there is concomitance at all? Leibnitz solved this riddle by positing a divine law of "pre-established harmony" between the two series of events. This, however, is no explanation, but a mixture of poor theology and worse science. For it is illegitimate to mix the function of secondary causes with that of the Great First Cause in this way; they belong to two orders of thinking, and while each is valid in its own sphere, you cannot logically bring in the one to account for the gaps in the other.

2. Modern parallelists have therefore attempted to bridge this gulf by the theory of the ultimate *identity* of mind and matter, but they again divide into two classes, one positing an unknown Reality of which mind and matter are two manifestations or aspects, either making this reality unknowable in itself (Herbert Spencer), or boldly calling it God (Spinoza) as the hidden source of all manifestations both physical and mental. We need not here trouble to characterise this theory further, since the arguments for and against can

[1] McDougall, *Body and Mind*, p. 131.

be equally dealt with in dealing with the other form in which the theory is widely held to-day, which is—

3. The theory that consciousness is the only Reality, matter being that form in which all consciousness other than my own is manifested to me, mind being my own consciousness. This is the opposite theory to that of epiphenomenalism, "which makes thought the shadow of things," for it makes "things the shadow of thoughts." At first blush this form of psycho-physical parallelism, by giving the primacy to mind, would seem to make for the permanency of the individual soul, and so far the doctrine of immortality. As worked out by its most consistent exponents, however, this result does not follow. except in an impersonal and metaphorical way. For by resolving all things into forms of consciousness it must treat the particular consciousness of the individual as a manifestation (and possibly an evanescent manifestation) of the universal consciousness; just as a wave that rises and falls is but a particular (and evanescent) phenomenon of the universal sea.

It is needless here to deal with the various forms of psycho-physical parallelism. Briefly they all imply the identity of matter and mind, as do the materialists; but while the latter express all mental facts in terms of the physical, the former express all physical facts in terms of mentality. The most thorough-going form is that of Fechner, the German idealist, who has recently been championed by Professor W. James and others. According to this thinker every existing thing, however material it may be, has its own measure of consciousness or sub-consciousness, the latter rising over the "threshold" into actual and ever more intense con-

sciousness, as life becomes more highly organised. Each individual consciousness is something like an eddy or "node" in the larger consciousness of the universe. The dust speck in the air, the very atoms of matter, have their modicum of it; larger material aggregates have theirs; there is a consciousness of the fly, the bird, the man, but also of the mountain, the earth, the sun, and each larger circle includes the lesser, till in the universal consciousness all lesser forms are merged, as the ocean unifies all its streams and eddies, its pools and bays and seas, little and great. Even our own personal consciousness is but the "polled sum" of those of the individual organs and cells of the body, which run into one because of the continuity of the bodily nervous processes, forming a final unity in virtue of the distinctiveness of the body as an organism. In the same manner, we have the social consciousness of a community in virtue of its internal continuity of intercourse, and of its separableness from other communities; we have various types of national consciousness; and we have the race-consciousness of mankind as a whole. Summing up all these ever-enlarging aggregates of consciousness, we arrive at the all-inclusive consciousness of the Universe—*i.e.*, of God, in whom we live and move and have our being as individual and social aggregates.

It is clear that on this basis the word soul stands for no positive, integral entity, and that it can have no *personal* persistence after the dissolution of the organism in virtue of which alone it has any unitary existence. Pure Monism, whether Idealistic or Materialistic, is thus quite unable to assure us of immortality, except in

the derivative sense of a continued influence on the minds of others, so long as we are remembered and the value of our work persists; and this, as we have already seen, is a notion of immortality which, while true so far as it goes, brings no ultimate satisfaction to those who (we think rightly) consider the continuance and perfecting of their personal life in another state of existence the only tenable theory of immortality.

The theory of psycho-physical parallelism (or identity) finally breaks down at this point. It cannot account (1) for the unitary character of all consciousness as we know it. If we appeal not to theory but to experience, we must characterise every known consciousness as *mine*, or *yours*, or *his*. We KNOW of no other than personal consciousness; if indeed we cannot say there *is* no other. (2) And for such forms of consciousness there can be no coalescence, though there certainly is a partial interpenetration or transfusion of various individual consciousnesses in social intercourse. I am aware of my friend's mind, thoughts, feelings; but only in virtue of the persistence of his individuality and of my own perceiving mind. When my friend dies, I am not in the least under the impression that my conscious life has been enriched through partial coalescence of his with mine as a slightly larger fraction of the "earth" consciousness of the "all" consciousness; on the contrary *I have lost him*, except in so far as he survives in a fainter and quite unresponsive way in my memory of him. And even when, through the operation of love and sympathy, I am most conscious of the warmth and glow of my friend's personality, this is still of value for both of us only in virtue of our distinctiveness as

individual persons. We can go so far as to say that if it were possible for two minds really to coalesce into one form of consciousness, it would be a weaker form than that of either before the coalescence took place. Neither Fechner, nor his more modern representatives Paulsen, Münsterberg, or James, has in the least got over this fact of the essential distinctiveness of each personal consciousness, or suggested a way in which any two such consciousnesses can merge into a third, without eliminating themselves and each other in the process.

Nor, finally, can this form of idealism account for or give an adequate place in its theory of mind for the *sense of personal identity*. All consciousness, we are told, is known to us as a stream, a flow, an everchanging process in time. But how, if this be all, can such a stream of sensations, ideas, memories, impulses, ever become conscious of *itself* as an organic whole? What is it in mind that can *reflect* on its own manifestations? How can that which is but a present stream *remember* past phases in that stream? What is it that can hold past, present, and future in one comprehensive mental grasp or conspectus? Pure Monism has no answer to this enigma. "Soul," says Paulsen,[1] for instance, "is the multiplicity of inner experiences, bound together in a unity in a way of which nothing further can be said." And again, "It is a fact that the processes of the inner life do not occur in isolation, and that each is lived in the consciousness of belonging to the unitary whole of the individual life. *How this can happen I cannot pretend to say any more than I can say how consciousness is at all possible.*" [Italics ours.] This is little better,

[1] *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 387, quoted by McDougall.

as McDougall suggests, than the famous confession of a certain philosopher, "Gentlemen, let us look this difficulty boldly in the face, and pass on to the next!"

Thus, neither the epiphenomenal theory of the relation of mind and brain, nor the various theories of the parallelism of mind and matter, appear to us to present any consistent explanation of the crucial facts of our conscious personal life. Thorough-going philosophical Monism of every type, whether materialistic or psychical, can, in other words, only maintain itself by slurring over essential differences, which tend ultimately to reassert themselves against any and every attempt to ignore or subsume them under insufficient catagories of identity. Some other freer and more adequate theory must be found which will permit the widest contrasts in our experience to assert their true value while finding their ultimate harmony in a still deeper unity.

## V

This can in our judgment be found only in the proximate dualism of mind and matter which yet permits them to interact on each other freely under certain conditions. The dualism is real, and must not be slurred over; yet is the interaction real, which proves that they have that in common which suggests an underlying unity. And for philosophical minds that are also religious this underlying unity can only be found in the creative and sustaining activity of a personal God.

1. First, as to the dualism of mind and matter. This consists in the fact that all forms and conditions of matter are under the sway of mechanical laws; while

mind is essentially teleological and purposive in all its manifestations. The changes of matter are quantitative; those of mind are qualitative. Matter moves *a tergo* as it is impelled from behind: its *primum mobile* lies in the past; mind (including all forms of life) energises as inspired by desire for the accomplishment of ends; its impulse is drawn from the future. Matter belongs to the realm of necessity, mind to that of spontaneity, choice and freedom. There is thus a wide disparity in their attributes and manifestations; and this disparity should not be minimised in the interests of any theory, monistic or otherwise. If Monists we must be, it is on grounds that give the contrasted aspects of mind and matter their full significance and value. And only Theistic Monism can do that.

Now Man as the highest of organised or living creatures is a strange compound of these two contrasted forms of being. He *is* mind, and he *has* a body: and these are joined in an intimacy of relationship which is at once the mystery and the explanation of his being. His earthly experience is a perpetual attempt in the sphere of conduct or behaviour to solve the practical problems of the psycho-physical conditions of his existence. And briefly, the central problem of human life is so to use the relationship of mind and body as to further the ends of this higher or spiritual life: to "win" for himself a "soul" through the interaction of mind and body; in other words, to DERIVE from all his psycho-physical experiences their highest spiritual values.

2. But is this interaction real? That is the crucial question for us here. We can only very briefly sum-

marise the positive argument, leaving the interested reader to the more technical literature of the subject for a fuller treatment.

We begin by pointing once more to the fact that in the upward march of life there has been a continuous development in the scope and richness of its psychic or mental side. How far down in the scale consciousness begins to appear it is impossible experimentally to point out; but all the indications tend to the conclusion that in some dim and imperfect way (*e.g.*, as a sense of want and an incipient form of desire, and so of volition) the simplest form of life has its conscious side. Faint and few are the felt wants of a monad or amœba, but such as they are, they are real, and by purposive action they are capable within narrow limits of being met. As living creatures rise in complexity of organisation, and more especially in the complexity of their nervous system, the psychic elements are quickened and sharpened, and that in exact correspondence with their vital needs. The reason which naturally suggests itself is that in virtue of their psychic qualities, living beings are better able to serve these vital needs; to defend themselves, *e.g.*, against their enemies; to find, eat, and digest their food; to reproduce their kind; to rear their young; and so to enable their type to persist in the struggle for existence. All its operations and activities imply purposive action, and purposive action is always mental in nature and origin, having the idea of an end as its goal, and some form of desire for its efficient impulse. *From the purely evolutionary standpoint, therefore, we seem forced to the conclusion that mind can act on body, by directing*

*its energies towards ends that are vitally fruitful.* To refuse to accept this conclusion is to make the simultaneous emergence and close co-ordination of physical and psychical factors in the upward march of life an insoluble enigma.

So much for the general question as seen in the light of that theory of Evolution which is now universally held, however doubtful its *modus operandi.* The same conclusion is brought home to us from the side of the *physiology* of the individual organism. This is the home of innumerable chemical and physical reactions, and of an indescribably complex co-ordination of processes, which are held together and directed towards a common vital end. The substances and reactions involved in these processes are confessedly material, and follow the mechanical laws that always rule in the world of matter. *But whence comes their guiding and controlling principle?* How is it that these changes, so diverse and multiform in character, all work to the common end of maintaining the inner harmony and wellbeing of the organism as a whole? Whence comes its stubborn unity, which is maintained unbroken through all the processes of growth, waste and repair? What is the secret of that wonderful healing process whereby deleterious substances are eliminated, wounds made whole, sickness dispelled, and the integrity of the constitution retained through all the unforeseen vicissitudes of experience? To say that these activities are all mechanical—*i.e.*, involved in the very constitution of matter—is to ignore the fundamental difference between living and dead forms of matter, which is the very problem to be solved. What happens, then,

when death suddenly supervenes, and all the processes involved as suddenly cease, leaving the body a mass of disintegration and corruption? *Something has disappeared*, and this something is that non-material vital principle which had held together and directed the physical and chemical operations of the organism in the interests of life—a principle which, pervading and controlling the whole as from some mysterious centre, does the same kind of work for the body as the human mind does in its operations on the wider environment in which it lives, moves and has its earthly being.

*Psychology* tells the same tale. Our mental life is composed of the most diverse elements provided by the special senses—sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, and the undifferentiated feelings which accompany our organic processes. What is it that co-ordinates these sensations into a psychic whole? Granted the separable forms of consciousness, what is it that accounts for our *self*-consciousness? How are my varied sensations all referred to a common centre, and felt to be *my* sensations? What is it that enables me to discriminate between these sensations as successive or different, to classify them, refer them to their special origin, and at the same time distinguish between my permanent self, and all these passing phases of my experience? How comes it that I can distinguish between my present sensations and my past, and realise amid the flux of time my stable self-identity? And, greater mystery still, what is it that amid the stream of consciousness enables me to arrest its flow, and combine in new wholes the mingled elements of present sensation and past recollection? If we posit a soul, for which these things

*are*, but which is not to be identified with any or all of them, we have a working theory of experience that is rational, and meets the facts; if we say the "soul" is only the sum of our experiences, we are lost in enigmas to which there is no answer.

We claim, therefore, that the phenomena of our living experience are best explained on the theory of two entities—body and soul—which interact on each other during the whole of our life, and find their deeper unity in a creative act of God, in virtue of which they are brought together at birth, and maintained in close and fruitful relationships till death puts an end to it. Neither the theory of identity nor of parallelism satisfies the conditions of this problem; the former confounds things essentially different, and the latter fails to meet the facts of the case as does the idea of interaction. We are still left with many problems on our hands. Science, for instance, has nothing to say as to the origin of the soul, or its destiny, nor can it tell us the nature of the bond that builds body and soul together; all it can do is to deal with the phenomena of our psycho-physical life while under our observation, which is its proper sphere. Enough if it leaves the question of origin, and especially of destiny, free and open for consideration, without prejudicing the issue from other and deeper points of view.

## VI

Before closing this discussion, something must be said of the results of that great inquiry into the relation of body and soul which was initiated about thirty years ago by the *Society for Psychical Research.*

These results are pertinent to our inquiry only in so far as they bear out the conclusion that the complex constitution of man includes such an entity as the soul, that it is separable from the bodily functions, and that it is capable of survival of bodily death.

The painstaking and scientifically conducted investigations of the eminent group of skilled observers who have carried on the work of this society have already given rise to a voluminous literature, which has exercised a profound influence in modifying the agnostic attitude of scientists of every school of thought on this subject. Beginning with the phenomena of unconscious muscular action, as exemplified in the movements of the *pendule explorateur* and other objects (such as the *divining-rod*, the *autoscope*, etc.), and passing on to the phenomena of *thought-transference*, *hypnotism*, *telepathy*, *phantasms of the living or the dead*, *dreams*, *supernormal perception*, *hauntings*, *and cross-correspondence through automatic writing*, they have arrived at the theory of the sub-conscious personality, which has exercised so deep an influence on modern psychology. By this is meant that consciousness as we know it is only a part of our mental or spiritual activity; and that in the dim recesses of our being many wonderful operations are taking place continually, only a small part of which ever rise above the threshold of consciousness, but which profoundly influence us in many ways. The facts of this sub- and super-normal mental activity are no longer in doubt; but their explanation is not so clear. Already, however, they tell heavily against the theory of materialism, and in favour of the three points mentioned above.

1. *The existence of the soul.* The abnormal facts established by the above investigations strongly suggest the theory that the body is inhabited by a spiritual entity which uses the body for its own ends, but is not the mere sum of the mental operations which are the psychic equivalent of our nervous reactions. This entity is, in certain sensitive or telepathic individuals, capable of perceptions of facts at a distance without the help of the bodily sensations, being most active when these are quiescent, and when the normal consciousness is somnolent. In such states the "self" seems to sink into its own inner depths and to be capable of perceiving far away or future events unknown to those within reach of sensuous communication, and of which the subject could not possibly have had any previous knowledge. The cumulative evidence for these facts is so manifold and impressive that they can no longer be doubted by any reasonable mind. The late Professor F. W. H. Myers was led by it to the following conclusion: "I regard each man as at once profoundly unitary and almost infinitely composite, as inheriting from earthly ancestors a multiplex and "colonial" organism—polyzoic and perhaps polypsychic in an extreme degree; but also as ruling and unifying that organism by a soul or spirit absolutely beyond our present analysis—a soul which has originated in a spiritual or metethereal environment; which even while embodied subsists in that environment, and which will subsist therein after that body's decay."[1] He continues, "Whether or no this thesis be as yet sufficiently

[1] *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, vol. i., p. 34.

proved, it is at least at variance with no scientific principle nor established fact whatever; and it is of a nature which continued evidence may conceivably establish to the satisfaction of all. The negative thesis, on the other hand, is a thesis in unstable equilibrium. It cannot be absolutely proved by any number of negative instances, and it may be disproved by a single positive instance. It may have at present a greater scientific currency, but it can have no real authority as against the view defended in these pages."[1] This position, it is true, is not taken up by all psychologists. Professor W. James, for instance, though in his great work on the *Principles of Psychology* he felt forced to recognise something of the nature of a true soul, gave up this notion later, and held to the "transmission" theory of consciousness, as though it were a kind of sea of light lying beyond sense, and breaking through the "transparent" brain substance into the world of sense, the higher levels of consciousness being composed of lesser streams at a lower level. This, however, he confessed to believe at the expense of logic and common sense, and in the interests of a theory which in itself is questionable, and to our judgment inconsistent. Apart from such *a priori* theories, it is difficult to believe that any psychologist can refuse to recognise in the facts evidence of the existence and activity within the body of such a controlling and co-ordinating entity as is implied in the word "soul" or "spirit."

2. *The partial independence of Mind and Body.* The older psychologists held to the complete corre-

[1] ***Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death,*** **vol. i., p. 35.**

spondence of our mental and nervous processes, and so far as ordinary consciousness is concerned, there is no reason (as we have seen) to modify that position. But the discovery of the subconscious "self," together with many facts of abnormal psychic life have seriously modified this theory. These results suggest that the conscious self, which acts through the special senses, is only a small part of our total personality, which lies behind this more or less brightly illuminated area as a dark but active background into which the impressions of the outer world sink, and where they are profoundly modified before they rise again into clear consciousness. Many of our actions also are initiated in impulses rising spontaneously out of this dim background of being. In certain abnormal subjects, states occur in which the ordinary consciousness is quiescent, while the subconscious self becomes hyperactive, displaying powers of insight and capacities for knowledge of what takes place at a distance totally beyond the range of sense-perception, and disconnected with it, as the phenomena of hypnotic trance, hysteria, etc., abundantly prove. An exhaustive examination of these phenomena suggests that that portion of the self which is incarnate in the body is only a fraction—and a variable fraction—of its total being. Many aspects of what is called "dual" personality suggest that the same brain is used alternately by different "selves" (and sometimes even simultaneously). The power of phantasy in hysterical patients to create groups of sensations or "belts of anæsthesia out of relation with true anatomical areas" exhibits the power of mind to affect the body in a way inconsistent with any fixed law of co-ordination be-

tween bodily and mental processes.[1] The whole subject is very obscure, but enough has been established to shatter for ever the theory that the soul is the psychic equivalent of mechanical chemical and nervous changes in the body, and to suggest that the relation is much more separable than Victorian science had taken for granted to be the case.

3. *Survival of the soul after bodily death.* This problem has furnished the central motive for the investigations of the Society for Psychical Research, and accounts for the long, patient and cautious way in which these have been carried out. In spite of many baffling difficulties, many of the leading members have long been convinced that they have received definite messages from deceased persons, and these include such authorities as Messrs. Gurney and Myers, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir W. F. Barrett, Professor W. James, Dr. Hodgson, etc. Others confess that the evidence, while strongly suggesting survival, does not quite carry conviction to their minds, owing to our "ignorance of the limits to the scope of telepathic powers." Sir W. F. Barrett, in his little brochure on Psychical Research,[2] writes: "The well-authenticated cases of such communications" (*i.e.*, from discarnate spirits) "that have occurred during the last few years are far too numerous for recital here, even in the form of the barest catalogue. If we consider only the one particular little group of friends and colleagues who have so swiftly reassembled on the other side, we find instances many and impressive. Those who, like the present writer,

[1] Myers' *Human Personality, etc.*, vol. i., pp. 44 *et seq.*
[2] Williams and Norgate (Home University Library).

were intimate with them, have recognised repeatedly the familiar traits, material and trivial, habits of thought, and tricks of speech, that betoken a personality, or its *vraisemblance* still existing, though contending with obstacles which forbid more than an incomplete expression. Such changes as are noted might spring naturally from the changed conditions of the communicators."[1] Thus he finds that Frederick Myers "has lost nothing of his intense concern about his comrades on their homeward way," nor Henry Sidgwick "his propensity for awaiting results with scrupulous patience, though he has now, as well he may, added to patience a confident hope." And he ventures to add that "the evidence is being constantly strengthened, not by accumulation merely, but by increased cogency and purposefulness. If we review the past ten years we cannot fail to be struck by the steadily growing clearness of attempts on the part of those who have passed over to improve and multiply methods of communication."[2] Sir Oliver Lodge, in characterising the same group of phenomena, says: "The scientific explorer feels secure and happy in his advance only when one and the same hypothesis will account for everything—both old and new—which he encounters. The one hypothesis which seems to me most nearly to satisfy that condition in this case is that we are in indirect touch with some part of the surviving personality of a scholar, and that scholar F. W. H. Myers."[3]

[1] Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 237. [2] *Ib.*, p. 243. [3] *Ib.*, p. 244.

## VII

Without tying ourselves down to the above positive conclusions—since they are not accepted by all competent investigators—we may summarise the results of our excursion into the relations between present-day science and faith on the problem of immortality in the following way:

The scientific world has moved away steadily from the materialistic and quasi-materialistic view of the origin of mind which held the field a generation ago. Even when a spiritual theory of reality is not professed, the tendency is to recognise the reality of the apparent control exercised by the mind over the bodily processes. The theory of mutual interaction between mind and body is now strongly held by many leading psychologists. The recognition of the subconscious elements in human personality has gradually extended the range of facts to be taken into account, and immensely deepened the sense of the mystery of the spiritual life, and the insufficiency of the theory of its entire dependence on the bodily organism. And whether we accept the claims that the recent investigations of the S.P.R. have proved the survival by certain personalities of physical death or not, we must allow that they have at least immensely relieved the strain on faith in immortality, and opened up a door of hope that some day we may be forced by empirical evidence to believe that when the body dies, the soul still survives, carrying with it into the Unseen such riches (or dearth) of experience as it has accumulated in this life. To have arrived at this result is to make the task of religion, with its passionate

belief in the life to come, much easier in the age just dawning than it was in the generation just gone by.

But let it not be supposed that science will ever make the work of religion superfluous in this region. "Psychical research"—once more to quote Sir W. F. Barrett—"though it may strengthen the foundations, cannot take the place of religion, using in its widest sense that much-abused word. For after all, it deals with the *external*, though it be in an unseen world; and its chief value lies in the fulfilment of its work, whereby it reveals to us the inadequacy of the external, either here or hereafter, to satisfy the life of the soul. The psychical order is not the spiritual order, but a stepping-stone in the ascent of the soul to its own self-apprehension, its conscious sharing in the eternal divine life, of which Frederick Myers thus foretells:

> "And from thee, o'er some lucid ocean-rim,
> The phantom Past shall as a shadow flee;
> And thou be in the spirit, and everything
> Born in the God that shall be born in thee."[1]

[1] *Psychical Research*, p. 246.

# CHAPTER IV

## INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM THE NATURE OF HUMAN PERSONALITY, AND THE LIMITATIONS OF EXPERIENCE

"Wilt thou not ope thy heart to know
What rainbows teach and sunsets show?
Verdict which accumulates
From lengthening scroll of human fates,
Voice of earth to earth returned,
Prayers of saints that inly burned,—
Saying, *What is excellent,*
*As God lives, is permanent;*
*Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;*
*Hearts' love will meet thee again.*"

EMERSON: *Threnody.*

## CHAPTER IV

### INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM THE NATURE OF HUMAN PERSONALITY, AND THE LIMITATIONS OF EXPERIENCE

"Man's heart the Almighty set
By secret and inviolable springs."

EMERSON.

THE highest religious function of Science is to be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord, and the utmost we can ask of her is to keep the door guarded, but open, that devout souls may enjoy the freedom of the sanctuary. For more than a generation she has tried to turn them away by asserting that there was only a ruined shrine, where once was a "living" temple. Being advised that she was transgressing her true function, she has recently—rather unwillingly at first—been persuaded to stand aside, that religion may come to her own again. There are not wanting signs—if we may judge from the attitude of some of her chief votaries—that this acquiescent attitude will presently develop into something more positive, and that in the coming age Science will become the handmaid instead of the enemy of Faith, and welcome men to worship at the altar of that Deep Mystery that lies beyond the proper range of her own activities, but which she not long since called on them to ignore or even deny.

We may go further, and say that (often without knowing it) Science—which we have defined as "ordered thought about phenomena"—has always, in her least worshipful mood, been dependent on a great act of faith for the fulfilment of her function. For does she not always begin her investigations *on the assumption of the rationality of the Universe?* Without some such postulate we cannot take the first step towards Knowledge, even of the material order. That man is a reasonable being, and that corresponding to his nature there is a reasonable order and sequence of events in the objective world which he faces—these two theses must be at least tentatively taken for granted, before we can hope for fruitful results in any department of enquiry. Nor can there be any *a priori* proof of the correctness of these assumptions. They have to be taken for granted. There is indeed much to discourage us in our endeavour to justify them empirically, for our first impression of the multiform and diverse elements of experience is not that of order, but of confusion, often even of contradiction between this and that, these and those. It needs a passionate faith in the possibility and accessibility of knowledge before the quest for truth can begin, and long ere the goal is reached the intellectual quality and moral reserves of the seeker are taxed to the uttermost. It is only to the patient faithful student of Nature that the sunlit heights of truth unfold at last out of the inward confusion of thought with which he starts, and the outward confusion of fact, fiction and error, through which he blazes his path. The story of science is thus the story of a great adventure, the reward of which is the discovery of a wonderworld of order, beauty and

progress that lies beyond the many trials and failures of the way. The scientist is therefore the last man who should blame the assumptions of faith in our quest into the deeper meanings of reality on the spiritual side; nor can he find fault with us if we make further inferences from the moral reasonableness of the Universe. If the former must believe that there is an order of nature accessible to his faculties, the latter cannot be blamed for at least tentatively assuming that behind the tangle of phenomena and the confusions of experience there is a moral and spiritual order in which these find their solution. This is the fundamental principle enunciated in the dictum of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, " Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God, for he that cometh unto Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him " (Heb. xi. 6).

## I

In approaching our analysis of human nature on its spiritual side, we will begin with certain inferences suggested by the theory of Evolution in its bearing on our problem.

That theory presents us with a vision of life as a great upward-climbing force or impulse which ever exhausts yet ever renews itself in its endeavour to master its environment. This *élan vital*, or vital impulse, starts in very dim and tentative beginnings. It has to deal with a difficult and intractable environment—the system of non-living matter which is always and everywhere in a state of lapse and " dissipation," and which resists at every step the " integration " necessary to an evolving

system of life. But life is stubborn and resourceful, and while here and there and yonder it is driven back or pushed into blind alleys, it ever seeks the path of least resistance, and at last finds its way into the open. By steps infinitely slow and tentative it has developed forms of increasing complexity and vigour, till the world is filled with myriads of orders and genera and species in an ascending scale of physical efficiency and mental intelligence, at the head of which is Man himself. So tenacious of its ground and so resourceful in adaptation is this vital impulse that it has only allowed earlier forms to die out when they have failed to progress, or are proved to be in the way of the later and higher forms. Thus, many of the lower creatures still persist alongside the central line of developed and developing organisms, so that we can compare their characteristics, and note the stages of advance since they first appeared.

When we make such a comparison between Man and his humbler fellow-creatures, we arrive at some startling conclusions. While he bears traces of his lowly origins deeply graven in his bodily frame and his psychic nature, he stands forth in sudden and unique pre-eminence in these fundamental qualities that are peculiar to himself. *In him, consciousness becomes self-consciousness, instinct almost vanishes in reason, spontaneity of movement develops into freedom of action, the mere response to sense-stimulus rises into the power of creative thought and act.* And, most wonderful of all, by some secret process he has built up on the basis of the world of fact a world of "values," in which the measurements of more or less, here or there, now or then, have given place to a standard of good or bad,

better or worse. In other words, he has become a moral creature, and so has become a citizen of a new order, and the starting-point of a higher evolution. The new order is the system of spiritual realities which as yet he but dimly realises and faintly follows: the higher evolution is that which out of the natural rises into the ethical, and has for its goal and end the pursuit of a spiritual perfection all-commanding in its authority, and yet utterly unattainable within the conditions and limits of this earthly life.

Speaking generally, the upward march of life is marked by stages in which the organism puts forth new functions operating through special organs in correspondence with some fresh elements in the environment. Thus, accepting the dictum that the first forms of life were marine, and that some of them were periodically left between the daily tide-marks, these would gradually adapt themselves to a dual form of existence and become amphibious. Of these a certain portion would remain in that state, or even fall back and re-adapt themselves to aquatic conditions. Others would gradually discard the water, and put forth limbs and organs of breathing adapted to a terrestrial or aerial life. Meanwhile nearly all creatures would become sensitive and responsive to the world of light, and slowly develop vision: to the world of sound, and be able to hear: while terrestrial creatures would gradually adapt themselves in other directions to the complex conditions of life on land or in the air. The higher creatures would be in richer contact with their environment than the lower, and more thoroughly master over it; but *they would be least masters of that part of their environment to which they had last*

*begun to be adapted.* Again, the amount of adaptation (or preferably mastery) is always in strict proportion to the vital needs of an organism. The eye of the eagle is more perfect than that of the bat, because it needs long and clear vision for its life-purpose, but the bat has as much clearness of vision as is normally necessary for its well-being. Developing creatures are in imperfect but progressive correspondence with that circle in the total environment into touch with which they are slowly rising, but when they have reached their maturity as a species this correspondence is practically complete. Evolution is the *gradually successful attempt to invade and conquer fresh and higher ranges of environment in the interests of a functionally enriching organism.*

Now man has all the marks of a creature who is pushing upward into correspondences with a fresh environment. This new environment is the world of spiritual realities. His physical development is complete; his mental conquest of the world is proceeding at a rapid rate (never more rapidly than at present), but his spiritual evolution is still in its first stage of tentative and unstable equilibrium. Man's soul is filled with that "divine discontent" which makes the lower ranges of his environment unsatisfying to his growing nature, and impels him to ever-renewed efforts for a clearer vision and a surer foothold in this higher world. The story of his moral and spiritual aspirations is thus full of disquietude, and he is haunted with a feeling of perpetual failure and futility. Often he falls back weary and exhausted from his quest, and tries to bury himself in the easier and more familiar satisfactions and activities of his psychic and sensuous nature. But,

having tasted, however faintly, the quality of these higher relationships, the race has never succeeded in falling back contentedly into the lower world from which it had begun to emerge. Hence the dislocations, lapses, recoveries and periodic upward strivings of Man's higher and better nature. Ever ill at ease in a world that has grown too small for him, he is impelled to reach out, often with strong crying and bitter tears, into the new order that looms up so indistinctly and yet so alluringly before his dawning vision, and which he has begun to recognise as his true home. This involves a conflict within as well as without him, and accounts for the pain and travail, as well as the occasional joy and ecstasy of his spiritual experience.

And here we come upon a fact of measureless interest and significance. It has often been pointed out that in the conquest of the lower (material) circles of environment, *all effort after adaptation and mastery has to come from the side of the organism.* Nature at best *lends* herself to the uses of the creatures which she has brought forth, but she never actively *aids* them in their endeavours to come into correspondence with her. Impersonally and blindly she goes her way and fulfils her processes, but she has no care for her children: having brought them forth, she will as readily slay them with her heat and cold, her accidents and cataclysms, as delight them with her spring promise, and feed them with her fruitful harvests. But man has been haunted from of old with a sense that the spiritual environment is not only responsive to his needs, but in active fellowship with himself. For this higher world, in virtue of its spiritual character, is a world of *personal* relation-

ships; and personal relationships, in order to issue in any fruitfulness of intercourse, must be marked with reciprocity. Thus, religion is a twofold process. It is a process of aspiration and longing on the one side, and of revelation and grace on the other. It is man seeking fellowship with God: it is God seeking fellowship with man. Experience tells us that this dual end is not easy of attainment. Man's incipient spirituality is weak: it is hampered by the strength and passion of a lower nature already full-grown, which ever drags him down into its own abysses when he would strive upwards towards his dawning ideals. This being so, and God's method of creation and Providence being evolutionary, He cannot reveal Himself to man, or lift man up to Himself by one transcendent act of conquest. Only by a long historical process of training and discipline, marked by many pauses and retrogressions, has the end been achieved; "God, having of old time spoken to the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son" (Heb. i. 1, 2). And even though the objective revelation is complete in its essentials, its assimilation has still to be made, and this has proved so slow—thus heavy is the handicap of imperfection and the tendency to retrogress—that only a few individuals throughout the ages have been able or willing to rise into full and rewarding relations to the higher world of personal values revealed to mankind in the Gospel. The many have either been so lost in the lower environments of life, or are so lukewarm in their response to the higher, that we are still impelled to ask Peter's painful question, "Are there few that be saved?"

But here comes the crucial point—the world of spiritual values and relationships is timeless and eternal, and the scope of this life is so restricted that it is impossible to attain here even at the best to full and permanent possession of its good. And therefore, if man's "chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever," and if this is a rational universe, we are impelled to the conclusion that this life is not all, but that the relationship with God, begun here, demands another stage of being where it can be pursued to its destined consummation. If we can only reach the edge of this ocean of benefit and blessing in this life, and this life is all, then is existence a riddle indeed, and under the most favourable conditions it is full of disappointment. If, on the other hand, it is but the initial stage in a process of development of unknown range and beauty, then the spiritual stresses which make this life so hard, and its spiritual conquests so imperfect, are at least well worth the effort and the pain. Man's earthly state would thus suggest that this life is a preface to a higher, and that death is but the doorway into a larger life. And what Reason thus suggests as its conclusion, Faith affirms as its postulate.

## II

Let us come closer to the problem of the nature of Personality, and the light thus thrown on human destiny.

1. What is meant by saying that in man *consciousness becomes self-consciousness?*

Consciousness is difficult to define, but it may be

described as a series of sensations or "states of awareness" of certain objects in the environment or of certain inner experiences arising primarily out of functional changes in the organism. These states of consciousness, however complex or confused, are always *in time—i.e.*, they are constantly altering in character and intensity, forming an endless stream of experiences which constitute the ever-changing content of the mind during waking life, being interrupted only during sleep, or under accident or disease. So far there is no ground for believing in any essential difference between the mental history of man and that of the lower creatures. In our subjective experience, however, we do not identify ourselves with this stream of consciousness, but refer it to a permanent centre of experience which we call the soul or self. When we are aware of a sound or a perfume, a taste or a touch, a thrill of joy or twinge of pain, we do not *become* a sound, perfume, taste, touch, pleasure, or pain; these exist *for* us; *we* have them but do not identify ourselves with them; rather we clearly distinguish between the permanent conscious centre which is our *ego*, and these experiences which we refer to it as the abiding subject of them all. This permanent entity which *has* experiences, and *is* self-conscious, is the constitutive principle of personality. It cannot be a phenomenon, for it is that which binds all phenomena into a conscious unity. Nor is it the mere *sum* of our conscious states, for while it is in the very nature of these states that they are always changing, the self abides amid all changes. And what is true of sensations or conscious states is equally true of those acts of comparison or judgment which are the phases

of our *intellectual* life, and of those impulses or efficient movements of our *will*, in virtue of which we react causally on the objective or external world. Thus, both our passive experiences and our outgoings of intellectual and volitional energy *imply* a self-conscious subject to which they refer, or from which they proceed. Whenever we say "I see," or "I know," or "I will," we are affirming an experience which changes, and a soul or self that abides amidst all its changes. Consciousness is the experience of things that pass, self-consciousness is the sense of a personality that remains, and which is constant amid all the vicissitudes of experience. The question for us here is whether or not this changeless self is an eternal or immortal entity, over which death has no jurisdiction or power.

Some would say that because it has a beginning, so it must have an end. In order to avoid this conclusion some writers (*e.g.*, Plato) have denied the temporal origin to the soul, conceiving it as inherently eternal, without beginning or end. Immanuel Fichte and others in modern times have for the same reason affirmed the pre-existence of the soul. This, however, though held as a firm belief by nearly all Eastern thinkers, and by possibly an increasing number of people in our own country, is a precarious premise in the argument for immortality. The only psychological ground for such an inference—the facts of heredity—can be explained in another way. Nor does it follow that if the soul has had a beginning it must necessarily come to an end. "If," as Dr. Martineau puts it, "at a certain stage in the development of the cosmos, the Supreme Mind set up at a given centre a personal subject of

thought and will like His own . . . what is to prevent this from being a freehold in perpetuity? . . . Why may not the communicated Divine nature endure as long as the uncommunicated Source on which it lives? So far as thought, and love, and goodness are related to Time, their relation is not cyclical but progressive, not returning to their beginnings, but opening out into indefinite enlargement and acceleration. The dictum, therefore, that whatever begins must end, is one to which we are not bound to surrender: and the only pre-existence which we need allow to the Soul is latent within its Divine Source, ere yet its idea has taken effect and the personal monad been set up."[1]

Nor does the dependence of the soul on the body for its present forms and phases of consciousness necessitate the conclusion that the soul should cease to persist when the body dies. That conclusion would imply that the body is the *cause* of the soul, which, if the reasoning in the last chapter be valid, is not the case, their relation being one of interaction. It is true that when this relation comes to an end, the body decays: but the soul may conceivably survive the separation even if the body fails to do so.

2. What is meant by saying that "*instinct in the human personality almost vanishes in reason*"?

We say almost, but by no means quite. For there are

[1] *A Study in Religion*, vol. ii. (second edition, p. 334). "Everything which has once originated will endure for ever so soon as it possesses an unalterable value for the coherent system of the world; but it will in turn cease to be, if this is not the case" (Lotze). This is the metaphysical equivalent of the physiological law that an organ is persistent so long as it functions properly, and begins to atrophy when it fails to do so.

powerful instincts buried deep in our mental and bodily constitution, which have a profound influence on our conduct. We instinctively seek for food, shelter, safety, sex, and many other forms of organic satisfaction. Probably also such intellectual predispositions as the sense of causality, inference, the belief in an objective world, etc., have an instinctive element in them. It is clear enough, however, as Professor Bergson has so brilliantly expounded to us in his *Creative Evolution*, that while nature has moved towards torpidity in the vegetable world, and towards an overpowering development of instinct in the animal, she has arrived pre-eminently at intellectual consciousness in Man. He is the "reasoning animal" *par excellence*. His growth is *away* from instinct, and it is *towards* rationality. Now rationality implies consciousness of distinction between the mind and its objects: and it carries with it an ever-increasing power over its objects. Man's sovereignty over Nature is a rational sovereignty. He masters her secrets by reasoning his way through the tangle and confusion of her phenomena into the order that really unifies them, so assuming control over her forces. In so far as he rises above Nature and becomes her master, he proclaims himself to have penetrated into a higher supersensuous order, of which Nature is but an outer court or ante-chamber, and which is his distinctive region of activity as a self-conscious and rational being. To have gained foothold here carries with it a presumption that his fate is no longer bound up irrevocably within the limitations of the physical world, nor of that tiny portion of it which he calls his body. Death at last claims that body for its own; but it does not fol-

low that man's sovereign and immaterial mind shares in the same catastrophe.

3. What is meant by saying that in Man *spontaneity of movement develops into freedom of action?*

It is of the very nature of life that on one side it should be full of spontaneity, impulse and adventure. It flings itself experimentally on its surroundings, "bites" into time and space, and fights hard against the limitations of its non-living but by no means inactive environment. As soon as any living creature loses the spirit of adventure in the direction of its own appropriate function, it begins to be at the mercy of the disintegrative forces around it, and to decay: *it is on the way to death.* The higher it is in the scale of being, and the more *living* it is, then the more powerfully is this spontaneous principle manifested. In this, too, Man is supreme.

Spontaneity, however, is not freedom, but only its psychic condition and prophecy. The restless movements of the animal nature, seeking satisfaction for its cravings now in this and now in that direction, indicate the intensity of its vitality, but they are still conditioned by fixed laws and limitations. It is only when unified in a personality, and directed towards conscious and self-chosen ends, that the forces of spontaneity are transfigured into the factors of freedom, take on an ethical quality, and out of the *elements of behaviour* develop the *principles of character.* The creature who has arrived at this stage has attained to more than the control of its environment; it has developed into mastery of its own inner impulses, and become a free, self-governed moral being. By so doing it has left the

more natural world behind it, and proclaimed itself a citizen of the realm of spiritual freedom—nay, a son of the Highest, sharing His nature, and taken up into His fellowship. In this fact lies another intimation of man's immortality, or at least of its possibility and promise. The fact that man can misuse this freedom is no proof of the contrary; the utmost that can be inferred from the fact of sin, is that immortality may possibly be forfeited through alienation and separation from God, the fountain of life.

4. Finally, what is implied in saying that in Man the *mere response to sense-stimulus rises into the power of creative thought and will?*

Responsiveness is the passive side of spontaneity—the capacity to adapt itself to environment. Its subjective side is feeling, as the subjective side of spontaneity is will. Now, in the lower ranges of life action is mainly dependent on the stimulus of environment on the sensitive tissues of the organism. As we rise in the scale of being we find not less sensitiveness, but more reactive energy; and with the increase of spontaneous energy an increasing control over the conditions of existence. The limits of control, however, are predetermined by the life-interests of the creature. Every animal can only influence its environment just so far as its place in the order of Nature is thereby made secure, and its life functions rendered more efficient.

In man this law of parsimony or economy in the distribution of aptitudes and powers is transcended. His responsiveness to stimulus is wider and finer and more intense than is the case with any other creature. As already noted, he is alive to aspects of reality to

which all others are totally insensitive and unconscious, and which have no relevance to his mere persistence as a species. In spite of this, he is not more but less at the mercy of his surroundings. There is in him the gift of controlling, co-ordinating, and rearranging his impressions and feelings into fresh syntheses in which their intensity is increased and their significance is transformed. The given world of feeling thus becomes material for an ideal world of artistic and spiritual values. And this inner world of values, into which the outer world of mere fact and happening is transmuted, is no mere subjectivity, but a stable, august, and permanent order of relationships transcending space and time, which must be discovered by each for himself, and yet is the same for all. For the mind it is truth, for the feeling it is beauty, for the will it is virtue or holiness. This is the highest attribute of Man, proclaiming him at once the master of the natural order and the servant of the spiritual order. He wins his way creatively from the one into the other, and in doing so arrives at his proper status and true selfhood. As soon as he attains to this stage of experience, he knows that this energy and achievement is what he was made for—that this is his proper standard and quality of life as a man. The materials he extracts from the natural evanescent order; the *results* of his transforming energy are spiritual and permanent. In the symmetries of art he recombines the colours and sounds and forms of matter and life into ideal harmonies; in science he discovers the order, and uses the forces of matter for his own ends; in ethics and religion he extracts the higher values of experience for the perfecting of his soul, and

for the realisation of true relations with other personalities.

All this proves that Man's place in Nature is one which transcends the natural order, which it is his function to shape into higher and eternal values. Born *in* Nature, like other creatures, it is his business to rise *out of* the natural into the spiritual, and by transmuting fact into experience, and experience into character, and character into holiness, to proclaim himself a child of the Eternal and an heir of immortality. It is thus suggested that though Man was born to die, he was not born that *all of him should die* when this life, whose mortality he shares with lower creatures, comes to its inevitable end. If there is any rational meaning in life, it cannot be that a creature who is impelled by all that is good and great in him to rise by untold effort, measureless sacrifice, and endless aspiration into the realisation of a world of eternal values, should cease to exist simply because his physical frame is worn out. Such a destiny would involve a hopeless anticlimax, and the very values attained would lose all their validity, since, apart from the personalities possessing them (or possessed by them), they have no existence, and therefore no value. For—as we have already noted—what is heroism if there be no hero; love, with no lover and none to love; truth, apart from a mind that knows it to be true; holiness, except as an attribute of an actual soul that is holy? They are but abstractions, a memory, and a regret. Our very homage to beauty, goodness and truth as eternal entities, contains an implicit faith in the permanence of the personality which experiences them. Even those who have no explicit belief in an

after life can only justify their admiration for spiritual values on the assumption of their permanence, and there is no permanence for anything spiritual apart from the permanence of personality, of which they are the inalienable attributes.

True, it is only the comparatively few who in this life attain to any high standard of spiritual excellence. The many seem for the most part contented with the life of sensuous experience, and make little or no effort to rise out of it. The question, however, is not so much of the *actual* as of the *possible;* it is not of what man *is*, but of what he was manifestly *made for*. Theoretically, of course, it is conceivable that persistence of life beyond the grave depends on the attainment of the conditions of survival in this life. There are, however, other alternatives to this theory, with which we shall deal later; here it is only needful to point out that they exist. Our main purpose here is to unfold the implications of human personality in their bearing on the problem of immortality. We contend that these more than suggest, on the assumption that the universe is a rational order and not a mere chaos of meaningless facts, that in Man's higher nature we have a presumptive argument that this life is not all, and that the scale of our being demands further scope beyond the grave for the satisfaction of our moral aspirations and the fulfilment of our spiritual possibilities.

## III

This argument is immensely strengthened when we contrast the large outlook and unrealised potentialities of human nature with the narrow scope, uncertain foot-

hold, and manifold contingencies of our earthly experience.

One of the impressions that come home to most men at one time or another is a profound sense of the apparent irrelevancy of their higher life in face of the oppressive vastness of creation and the unheeding play of physical forces. This feeling has been greatly increased since the rise of the Copernican astronomy, and the discovery of the theory of evolution. The psalmist, even in the days of a merely parochial view of the universe, was sufficiently impressed with it to cry out as he gazed at the vast heavens above him and the indifferent earth beneath him, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii. 4). How much less significant does he seem to be now when our outlook on space has reduced the planet on which we live to a tiny pin-point in the sky, a mere speck of matter among myriads of stars whose parallax we cannot take, and of whose colossal magnitude we can make but a dim and uncertain guess; and when our outlook on time has made the normal space of our life but a moment in a limitless succession of millenniums! Our uncertain foothold on life in a world where the current of cosmic forces moves on in sublime heedlessness of our joys and sorrows, our efforts and ideals, is another experience whose poignant frequency is enough to bring discouragement to the most buoyant temperament, and to put our finest optimisms under eclipse. It seems impossible to believe that a being whose life at most is compassed within a few decades, and whose physical insignificance is so absolute in view of the illimitable leagues of space and

æons of time, should have any abiding significance in the deeper world of reality; and there are living philosophers who, oppressed with this unspeakable contrast, confess their utter inability to justify man's instinctive sense of his own paramount significance in a universe that seems to produce and to slay him with the same impassive indifference as it does the midge of an hour, or the lily of a day.

A deeper consideration of our problem, however, entirely reverses the significance of this contrast. Objectively man is but one among myriads of insignificant earthly species, and shares to the full the contingencies, accidents, diseases and inabilities of their lot. Subjectively, however, he stands out as the one supremely significant created being in the universe—so far as we know it. Brief as is the span of his existence, while he lives *all else exists for him.* The broad heavens and all they contain, the ample earth with its seas and mountains, beasts and birds, are to him but forms of consciousness, objects of thought. What are the forms and conditions of their existence apart from his seeing eye and reflective mind, no soul can tell; all we know of them is what is expressible in terms of our own experience. If consciousness is the only reality—a dictum that finds its votaries (as we have seen) among an increasing number of philosophers—then is the human mind the typical reality, for the only form of consciousness known to us is our own; even the Divine consciousness being only an inference from that which we ourselves experience. And if—avoiding this perilously subjective dictum—we recognise the quasi-independent reality of the objective universe, it is only as a co-

ordinate of our own subjectivity, or of some eternal subjectivity akin to ours. The oppressive magnitude of creation is therefore of no significance in view of the fact that even this is but a phase of our own experience; and the mind that can feel its own comparative nothingness thereby proclaims its supremacy over the material universe which knows nothing of its own magnitude and glory. "Man," writes Pascal, "is but a feeble reed, trembling in the midst of creation; but then, *he is endowed with thought.* It does not need the universe to arm for his destruction. A breath of wind, a drop of water, will suffice to kill him. But, though the universe were to fall on man and crush him, he would be greater in his death than the universe in its victory, for he would be conscious of defeat, and it would not be conscious of victory."

Thus, if science proclaims the insignificance of man in view of the stability and range and vastness of creation as a whole, religious philosophy tends to rehabilitate him as the supreme issue of creative life, in which it bursts into its finest flower, and breaks into consciousness of its own existence and meaning. There is here a qualitative difference, which gives Man his place at the head of all things, and in so doing takes away the sting of the fact that his physical frame is so frail, and his span of earthly life so brief. Wedded to a body that inherits the animal instincts of a myriad generations of lowly ancestors, and has to take its chance among the contingencies of the physical order, his spirit proclaims itself one with the Eternal Soul of things, and therefore not likely to be quenched with the breakdown of his physical frame, or sunk "with

the blossom and the bee" in the waters of a death from which there is no resurrection. Oppressed by the lapse of years and the waning of his physical vitality; tossed hither and thither on the waves of chance, and amid the play of circumstance; beaten to the very earth by the blows of misfortune; faced at last by the onset of the inevitable end, his soul, enriched by the bitterest experiences, and disciplined by the profoundest sorrows, often rises at the last into a supreme intuition of its own deathless quality, and faces the last enemy, not with the depression of a defeated captive, but with the assured faith of a destined conqueror. Is there no validity in the intuitions of such a faith? Then, indeed, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit," and the creative impulse which has climbed "through all the spires of form" up to this pinnacle of attainment and promise, comes to its victory only to confess its confusion and defeat. There is something in the magnificent heroisms called forth by the disastrous war that has been raging from Flanders to Mesopotamia which gives a particular and poignant meaning to these considerations. That men should live for ends which cannot possibly be attained within the compass of their own individual lives is in itself an indication of something in human nature which is above time and space; but that millions of men, in the first glow and passion of their youth, and therefore at the time when they crave most for immediate and personal satisfactions, should be ready, freely and joyously, to surrender their all and to offer their lives for liberties they will never share, is a transcendent indication of a deathless quality in their nature. If this life be all there is for us, there

is no rational ground on which we can ask one man to give his life for another, and there is no rational ground why he should offer it himself for ideal ends or for future benefits for the race. The instinct which prompts such an act is spiritual; it wells up from depths which have no relevancy to the conditions of our earthly life, and is directed to ends that outreach them. It is nothing to the point that few of our soldiers do this from any conscious motive, or realise the nobility of their attitude; if anything, this enhances its significance, since it emerges from a region of their nature that lies beyond the range of consciousness, or shows up brilliantly through the disturbance of secondary motives. And the fact that this heroic quality is shown not by select and highly endowed individuals, but by ordinary men, proves that it is normal and inherent in human nature as such. A being who is capable of such a temper, either shows himself incurably irrational, or claims that there is within him a principle which is intuitively felt to be deathless. Still more is this manifest in those cases where men suffer for a faith which can bring no earthly reward to anyone through its vindication, but which is felt by its votaries to be not only worth living for, but worth dying for. Such acts lift human personality to a plane of values incommensurable by any earthly or temporal standards, and suggest the Divine origin and destiny of the soul.

# PART II

# HISTORICAL

## CHAPTER I

### THE RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT FOR IMMORTALITY, AS UNFOLDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"The Hebrew thinker . . . came down from his thought of God upon the world; he did not rise from the world to his thought of God. His primary thought of God explained to him the world, both its existence and the course of events upon it; these did not suggest to him either the existence or the character of God, these being unknown to him. The thought of the Hebrew, and his contemplation of providence and life, were never of the nature of a search after God whom he did not know, but always of the nature of a recognition and observation of God whom he already knew."—A. B. Davidson.

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"For all the Past, read true, is Prophecy,
And all the first are hauntings of the last,
And all the Springs are flashlights of one Spring."
FRANCIS THOMPSON.

POWERFUL and impressive as are the arguments in favour of a belief in immortality, drawn from a consideration of the constitution of human personality, they have validity only for those who, facing the universe as a rational and moral order, believe (at least implicitly) in God. This is seen negatively in the fact that those thinkers who reject or neglect the hypothesis of a personal Creator, however high their conception of human personality, fail to draw from that conception the inference of a future life. As a matter of fact, however, there is seldom any adequate sense of personality among non-theistic or even Pantheistic philosophers. To the former man is a *nexus* of perishable psychical factors; to the latter he is a passing phase of Divine self-manifestation—a wave of conscious life that presently subsides into the undifferentiated sea of infinite Being. And it is seen, positively, in the fact that Theism, or belief in a personal God, is always accompanied by a more or less vivid faith in the immortality

of the soul. In a word, our doctrine of man and his fate is organically interwoven with our doctrine of God. This is another way of saying that in the last resort the religious argument for immortality is the only one that can stand the ultimate test. Our final hope of survival in a future state of existence is conditioned by our experience of God rather than of man.

A brief outline of the rise of the doctrine of immortality in Old Testament times, and of its consummation in the New, will be our best way of testing the validity of this contention. We limit ourselves to this line of enquiry because only in the history of thought among the Hebrew nation do we find any real and fruitful advance in handling this problem. All ancient nations believed in some form of survival for the soul after death, but only in that particular line of development do we come at last to an adequate and permanent doctrine of immortality. It is certainly the only one that can stand the shocks of modern physical science and agnostic philosophy. In no other way can we find an adequate comfort in the instabilities of experience, and a sufficient encouragement to live the life of the spirit in a world of temptation and death.

The subject is one of great complexity, but we shall endeavour to avoid all but those aspects of the long religious development of Israel from the time of Moses till the coming of Christ that are essential for our purpose. This may be divided into three periods—Pre-prophetic Jahwism, Prophetism, and Apocalyptic. In the first the doctrine of survival held among the Hebrews was an entirely heathen conception, out of relation to their distinctive religious tenets. In the

second the doctrine previously held concerning the after-life was being slowly brought into relation to the theology of the prophetic writers. In the third, something like real harmony was attained between the mature Jewish doctrine of God and that of the future life. In all these there was a process of revelation on the one side, and of growing apprehension of a Divine power in human life on the other, which led on steadily to the final revelation of the nature of God in Jesus Christ, who, in revealing the Father, finally brought "life and immortality to light in His Gospel."

It is of the utmost importance to note at the outset that during all these centuries of religious development the growth and nature of Hebrew belief in a future life depended on two determining facts—(1) the gradual unfolding of the character of God from that of a mere tribal deity to that of the Holy and Universal Father of mankind; and (2) the many overwhelming vicissitudes in the experiences of the nation and of devout individuals during those stressful centuries. Out of the interplay of these two factors rose that faith in immortality which prevailed substantially among the Jewish people in the first century B.C., which Jesus received as His spiritual heritage, and out of which He unfolded His own distinctive and final revelation. Of these two factors the former was the more important, but it would have been largely inoperative without the latter. The manifestation of God's will for mankind in the future state as well as in the present was mediated through the tragic experiences of the chosen nation as interpreted by its greatest personalities. If we grasp these two facts in their spiritual bearings, everything

else falls into line; a flood of light is thrown on the eschatological situation in the time when the New Testament was written: and we are able to formulate with some confidence a constructive theory of the essential Christian doctrine.

## I

Let us, then, begin our survey with a brief account of the pre-prophetic conception of God held by the Hebrew nation.

This was, broadly speaking, Henotheistic or Monolatrous—*i.e.*, Jahweh was conceived of as Israel's God, and Israel as God's chosen nation. There were other nations and other gods—tribal, national, territorial; among these Jahweh alone had any religious significance for Israel, except when (as not infrequently happened owing to the vicissitudes of war) they forsook Him for a time for other deities. Through His deliverance of His people from the slavery of Egypt, He had entered into an abiding covenant with them, and however faithless they might occasionally be to Him, He was always faithful to them. Thus, from the outset there was an ethical note in the religion of Israel, and prosperity or misfortune was always interpreted as a manifestation not of any capricious attribute in God, but as the apportionment of reward or punishment to the people for their conduct. When they obeyed His will, and honoured His worship, they believed they were happy and prosperous; if they failed in their duty, misfortune always followed. Conversely, when they were beaten in battle, or visited with plague or tempest or any form of calamity, they were led to examine them-

selves, that they might discover in what direction they had failed in their duty. This rough and ready relation between religious conduct and outward experience was sufficiently true to facts to carry the nation through centuries of wavering fortune without raising any very troublesome problems. Imperfect as such a theory must now be held to be, it had an enormous influence in deepening the spiritual life of the nation, and keeping it faithful to its covenantal relation to its God. At the same time it developed a belief in Him as an essentially holy and righteous deity, who was active in promoting their social welfare because profoundly concerned in their moral condition.

It is important to remember that during the whole of this period—down to the rise of prophetism in the ninth century B.C.—the religious unit was always the nation, and not the individual, who had no religious significance except as a member of the commonwealth with which the original covenant had been made. The individual shared in the corporate lot and responsibility—for every community consists in the last resort of single persons—but *as* an individual he had no covenant of his own to appeal to; if therefore he shared in the common lot of weal or woe, he had no ground of protest or complaint, and must take his chance, whatever happened to him, without demur. In other words, while he had social duties, he had no personal rights, and no claim for individual treatment, except as he helped or hindered the general well-being.

This being so, it is clear that the doctrine of God in early Hebraism could have no influence on any ideas that might be current concerning a future existence for

the individual. The only future that was significant for religion at such a stage was the future of the nation. Interest in this was intense from the earliest times. Jahweh was a great God and would ensure a great future for His chosen people. Thus, the eyes of law-giver and seer, priest and people, were ever eagerly directed to the time when Israel would be a mighty nation and control the destiny of the world. To secure such sovereignty was the passionate national ideal, and to it all personal interests were subordinated. In the glow of this great Hope, the individual was accounted as a mere item in the programme, who must account himself happy if, whether living or dying, he were used of Jahweh to bring His great ends to pass.

What, then, was the current theory concerning the fate of the individual at death?

In common with all ancient peoples the Hebrews firmly believed in the survival of the "soul" or "spirit," but in an attenuated and ineffective sense. It is generally held that in this form the doctrine was a survival of primitive ancestor-worship. The further back we go the more vivid is this belief, the state of the dead being conceived of as a feeble but faithful reproduction of their earthly condition. Thus they were held to share in the vicissitudes of their posterity and to be able to benefit or injure them.[1] Therefore the living were careful to show great honour, and even to offer sacrifices, to the dead. The *teraphim* were ancestral images of a crude kind, and were held sacred and consulted as oracles; indeed, they were the household gods which formed part of the furniture of well-to-do families (*cf.* Gen.

[1] Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life*, p. 20.

xxxi. 19, 30-35; 1 Sam. xix. 13-16; 2 Kings xxiii. 24; also Exod. xx. 2-6). According to Dillmann, this cult of household gods was firmly established in the family of Jacob before it went down into Egypt, and must have flourished among the people after their settlement in Canaan, down to the latest period of the monarchy. Many other current and long-continued customs bear witness to the belief in survival of bodily death. The soul being considered as still in some dim sense connected with the dead body, great reverence was shown to the latter, both in preserving it from injury or outrage, and in securing burial for it; this was always, if possible, in the family grave (*cf.* Gen. xv. 15; xlix. 29-33; l. 25, etc.). In a wider sense the graves of the tribe or nation were regarded as united in one. Thus arose the conception of Sheol, or Place of the Dead, believed to be ultimately the final abode of all mankind, good and bad, "an idea which dates back probably to the period when the Hebrew clans dwelt in the Valley of the Euphrates, and shared this belief with the Babylonians of the time." A man won his chance of joining his particular family or clan in Sheol by being interred in his family grave.

What were the Hebrew ideas concerning the conditions of existence in Sheol? Like the Hades and Tartarus of the Greeks, it was not a place to be desired. The dead were conceived of as dwelling in a dark and barren place below the earth, in a feeble and ineffectual condition, without occupation or hope. It is important to remember that Jahweh had no jurisdiction or power over this shadowland of the dead, His sway extending only over the upper world of the living

—*i.e.*, His own people and land (*cf.* Ps. lxxxiii. 5; xxxi. 22; Isa. xxxviii. 18). He could not favour or help the dead; they had passed beyond His range of influence, were banished out of His sight and care. The moral distinctions of the living world did not persist beyond the grave; there was "one end to the righteous and the wicked." Such a view must have greatly emphasised the fear of death. This shadow that lies like a pall over the future beyond the grave is never really lifted in the Old Testament. All that was desirable for the Hebrew, as for all other peoples was found this side of the inevitable end. We have to go to the later extra-canonical writings for the first authentic ray of light, the earliest gleam of hope, as to what lies behind the veil.

Another feature of the Old Testament view of the afterlife is that as time goes on that view becomes more and more gloomy. Sheol is the land of forgetfulness, silence and destruction; the dead cannot return to visit the living, and know not what may befall them; all the inhabitants of Sheol, whether kings or beggars, oppressor or oppressed, good or bad, are buried in profound sleep and forgetfulness (Ps. lxxxviii. 12, xciv. 17, cxv. 17; Job iii. 14-20, xxviii. 2, vii. 4, 9, xiv. 12, 21; Eccles. ix. 5, 10). This conception of human nature and of the state of the dead issued historically in the view of the Sadducees in the time of Christ, who believed that there were neither "angels nor spirits" (Acts xxiii. 8). But before their time the view prevailed that though the soul might *subsist* after death, it did not in any real and effective sense *exist*. It is clear that such a view of the future life held within its feeble grasp no motive-power over conduct in

the present life. All moral incentives were social in character; the individual simply existed for the sake of the nation, and only in the prosperity of the community could he find any reward for personal good conduct. This line of thought might be effective for the purposes of patriotism; it had no function to perform on behalf of personal religion in the higher sense.

## II

With the rise of prophetism, however, a brighter day dawned for personal religion in Israel. Not, indeed, at first, for the earlier prophets, still obsessed with undying hope for the future of the nation as such, were mainly concerned with social problems, and viewed personal conduct only in its effect on national well-being, and with the place of the nation in the purpose of God, but having no particular concern in the fate of the individual as an individual. The man who pleased Jahweh was the man who honoured Him, and who was just, temperate, law-abiding and benevolent in his social relations; and he was to find his sole reward in sharing the earthly prosperity and political progress of the nation. The time came, however, when this purely communal and positivist view of the ethical life was broken to pieces on the rock of national misfortune and captivity. From this time onward the central interest of religion began to shift from the corporate to the individual life. It was not that the national interest lost its hold, though it was gradually transformed, as we shall presently see; rather, within this larger concept grew an ever-deepening sense of the religious value of

the personal life. One of the most crucial results of this change was a gradually increasing solicitude as to the fate of the individual in the after-life. Let us briefly consider the stages of this revolutionary movement in Hebrew religion.

1. We notice that with the captivities of Israel and Judah there was a great enrichment and purification of the conception of God. It was one of the greatest triumphs of faith during that critical period that the downfall and scattering of the nation, instead of destroying their belief in Jahweh as their national duty, transformed it into something finer, purer, more spiritual. The exclusive aspect of His relation to His people gradually gave place of a sense of His relation, *through His people*, to mankind at large. His tribal function developed into a universal sovereignty, and Israel became His instrument for carrying His knowledge and power over the whole world. The character of Jahweh even as a tribal deity was differentiated from that of all other deities as holy, righteous, gracious and profoundly ethical (He was the covenant-keeping God from the first); but in the glory of the prophetic conception of Him, all other deities gradually faded into nothingness, and He was left in solitary pre-eminence, the supreme Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of all things, Whose holy will was the universal law, and in Whose favour alone was life. From this point of view we may say that the downfall of Judah, though *nationally* a great calamity, was "in a religious sense the greatest step towards Christianity since the Exodus. It made religion independent of any locality; it showed that the people of God could exist, though no longer in the form

of a state or nation."[1] And it opened the way to the conception of a Kingdom of God based on spiritual instead of political values. The greatest Hope the world has ever had was thus born out of the greatest disappointment of the people of God. Out of their national despair arose the first ray of that spiritual dawn which in Jesus was to broaden into the perfect day.

2. Even with the prophets and psalmists, however (if we except a few disputed passages), the future to which they looked forward with such intense anticipation in the light of the loftier conception of God was still bounded by the horizons of time. The eschatology of the prophets was still a national conception. It was drawn from their reflection of God's character as revealed in their own past; a projection, as it were, into coming centuries of their philosophy of history. Since God was the real maker of history, "so soon as the ethical being of Jehovah was conceived and His oneness as God, these could not but immediately follow the idea also that human history, which was not so much under His providence as His direct operation, would eventuate in a kingdom of righteousness which would embrace all mankind."[2] The individual would share in this as a member of the community, but in no other way; and only those individuals who would be alive in the great Day of Consummation could personally enter into its felicity. All others would only share in it in the sense that their work in its behalf would have come to its fruition, and that their memory would be honoured.

[1] Davidson, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 408.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 401.

The religion of the earlier prophets was thus positivist in character. The individual was taught to merge himself entirely in the thought of the community, and to comfort himself when the sense of his own evanescence oppressed him with the reflection that the nation would survive and be perfected.

3. With the Exile, however, a new factor came into consideration which was destined to revolutionise the whole subject of eschatology. This was the higher value ascribed to the individual. For with the Exile the nation as a unity ceased to exist, being broken and scattered through many lands. But when state and people had disappeared, God still remained, "and religion remained and there remained the individuals of the nation; and thus all that significance, and those responsibilities and hopes, which had belonged to the people before, were now felt by the individual to belong to him."[1] It is out of this purified and ennobled religious function of the individual as the channel through which true religion was to be maintained in the world, that the question of his fate in the after-life began to take significance and to become a pressing problem for faith.

4. For directly conscious thought was directed to this subject, the great disparity between the value and significance of the individual believer and his earthly fate could not but strike the mind with increasing force. Down to the time when the Book of Proverbs was written this feeling does not appear to have risen vividly enough to be reflected in Hebrew literature, but during and after the Exile it becomes clearly, and at last acutely, expressed. Hitherto—as we have seen—a

[1] Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 408.

*naïve* doctrine of Providence had taught the equivalence of merit and reward in this life. When the Exile dashed to the ground all hopes of political ascendency, the case was very different. During that disastrous time it was the just and faithful Hebrew who suffered most, and that because of his very righteousness—*i.e.*, his faithfulness to his God. Thus the belief in a retributive justice bedded into the very fabric of the world broke up, and at this thought the heart of the devout man melted within him. His belief in the sovereignty of God as the author of all events helped to deepen this confusion, for it made Him the accomplice—nay, the source—of all the unmerited misfortunes of the righteous (Job. ix. 24, xxiii. 16). This it was that constituted the most acute problem for faith at this period, and it was all the more painful because the current idea of survival beyond the grave could at that stage give no relief. For, as already seen, death meant not only separation from all that made life in the body desirable, but separation from God Himself, since He had no jurisdiction over the shadowland of *Sheol* or the grave. Since fellowship with God was the condition of all true life here, and gave it its highest worth, this induced an added horror of death. Faith here came to an *impasse* from which there appeared to be no escape.

## III

But neither outward misfortune nor the inner contradictions of experience have ever extinguished genuine faith, which often reasserts its sovereign rights most impressively when all seems lost. So here.

The great prophets of the Exile opened up one way of escape from the *impasse* of faith. In the first place Jeremiah first formulated the idea of an immediate personal relationship between the individual soul and God. This he represents as a new covenant of God with man, contrasted with the old in that (1) it was with the individual instead of the nation; (2) it was spiritual and not material; (3) it was redemptive. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord): but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, said the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. xxxi. 31-34). Here we find the foundation laid for a true individualism, and for an individual retribution.

Ezekiel carries this position one step further, but fails to go all the way. He emphasises the fact that every soul belongs to God and is in direct moral relation to God (Ezek. xviii. 4); and he deduces from this fact that (1) a man is responsible to God for his own deeds only (verse 3); (2) he is free from the heritage of evil that

descends from the past (verse 20); (3) if he repents of his own sin he shall be free from its punishment (verse 21); (4) but if having been a virtuous man he falls from grace and becomes a sinner, then his former goodness shall not avail him, but he "shall die in his sin" (verse 24). This is a profoundly moral doctrine, for it makes the outward lot of the sinner a concrete expression of his inner character. It is characteristic of the prophet that in enunciating this doctrine he is primarily concerned not so much with comforting the virtuous and warning the wicked as with vindicating the character of God as a righteous judge (verses 25-30), and in urging this as a motive for repentance and reformation of life (verses 31, 32). So far this was a gain, but it failed in three directions. In the first place, it *dissolved the community into a mass of individual units*, each of whom pursued independently his own way wholly unaffected by the rest, being responsible only for his own acts, and working out his salvation or his own doom.[1] This doctrine of a strictly individual retribution is worked out in greater detail in the Book of Proverbs, and in many of the Psalms. Here individualism is carried to excess through denying or ignoring the social relationships of mankind. Secondly, it *failed to correspond with experience.* It is not true that the individual does not suffer for the sins of his forefathers; and it is not true that in the present life the individual is judged in perfect accord with his merits or demerits. This latter fact gave rise to the problem dealt with in Ecclesiastes and in Job. To both of them the world was out of joint. In the former book we have the

[1] Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life*, pp. 63, 64.

cynic's answer to the problem. There is neither retribution nor reward in this life; the destiny of the wise man and the fool is identical; and death is the last word for both, beyond which there is nothing, "for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (ix. 10). The inevitable programme for such a life of agnostic individualism is to make the best of such chances as offer of earthly satisfaction while there is opportunity (ix. 4, 7, 9).

3. A much higher note is struck in Job,[1] where the spiritual turmoil caused in the heart of a good man by the inequalities of life is presented in a vivid and noble way. But even here the true solution is only twice suggested in a momentary manner: once when (in chapter xiv. 1-15) Job throws out the idea that, just as a tree cut down sprouts again, so it is conceivable that man should come to some vivifying experience after death and refind himself in God (verses 13, 14); and when, in a classic passage (chapter xix. 25-27), his faith bursts into a more or less assured foretaste of a life beyond the grave—"But I know that my Avenger liveth . . . and that without my body shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." These, however, are but wistful glimpses of the Better Way, and do not represent the writer's settled conviction, otherwise the main argument of the book becomes irrelevant. None the less Job represents a clear advance, raising the whole subject to a higher plane of thought, and showing that

[1] *Circa* 400 B.C. Ecclesiastes was written about two hundred years later, but it represents an earlier (destructive) point of view, and so has been noticed first.

the idea of a spiritual immortality was already in the air. Here we reach the high-water mark of prophetism in the Old Testament.[1]

## IV

We must now return for a moment to the idea of the Messianic or Divine Kingdom which represented the communal aspect of immortality. Throughout the prophetic literature the hope of an eternal Kingdom of God *on the present earth* ever hovered on the horizon of vision. This Kingdom was to consist of a regenerated nation in which the Divine Will was to be fulfilled perfectly, and which was consequently to be blessed with the actual presence of God. It was to be inaugurated by the "Day of Jahweh," when God would manifest Himself in victory over His foes. This conception the prophets had inherited from earlier times. Hitherto there was nothing ethical in this notion. It was but the popular conception of a judgment on Israel's earthly enemies—their vindication against all those who opposed their superiority in the world. Amos (760 B.C.) first introduced an ethical element into this idea, for he represents the Day of Jahweh as the occasion when God would vindicate His own character, even against Israel. In this he is followed still more emphatically by Hosea (746-734 B.C.) because of the corruptness of the nation. Isaiah (740 B.C.) directs it against Judah as well as Israel, and for the same reason, but he opens

[1] Ps. xlix. and lxxiii. (dealt with below, p. 133), together with interpolated passages in the prophets, represent a later stage of thought, and belong properly to Apocalyptic rather than Prophecy.

up a hope of restoration, though only for Israel. And Micah (723-700 B.C.), with still greater particularity, singles out Jerusalem for the Divine wrath. In Zephaniah (621 B.C.) a further step is made, for he conceives the Day of Jahweh as *the judgment of the whole world*, and the survival of a righteous remnant of Israel. This is consistent with his thoroughgoing Theism, for to him Jahweh is the God of the whole earth, and is pre-eminently a God of righteousness. In all these pre-exilic prophecies this judgment is collective. There is no hint of individual judgment.

After the Exile, as might be expected, the case is different. Here the individual Israelite comes into judgment, according to his character and works. A righteous community is to emerge as a consequence of this judgment. "Thus the eschatology of the individual becomes a part of the eschatology of the nation," and emerges into greater prominence as time goes on, as a result of the individualising of religion itself. Another feature of post-exilic views of judgment is that it is not merely condemnatory, but allied with promise and blessing. A distinction, however, must be drawn here. Two lines of development emerge, starting from Jeremiah on the one side, and from Ezekiel on the other. The former preaches a judgment which is vindictive only for the finally impenitent, for all others it is corrective and disciplinary; and its issue is the establishment of an eternal Messianic Kingdom, in the blessings of which all nations shall share. The latter and his successors look forward to a more particularistic view. Judgment is a purging of Israel of all evil elements, but it is the destruction, in whole or part, of all other nations, who are to be for ever

excluded from the Kingdom and its blessings. Here we come to the parting of the ways between the lines of development which lead to Christianity on the one hand, and on the other to the hard exclusive Judaism of later centuries. Jeremiah's teaching finds its finest development in the work of the "second" Isaiah (chapters xl.-lv., about 545 B.C.), who proclaims the function of the true Israel to be a missionary to the whole world, and to be a light to all nations (*cf.* Isa. ii. 2); while Haggai (520 B.C.) and Zechariah (520-518 B.C.) follow in the wake of Ezekiel.

In all these prophetic forecasts of the Messianic Kingdom, however, we have still not come to any synthesis between the eschatology, or fate of the righteous individual, and that of the nation. The prophets were held back from a solution of this problem (1) by their materialistic conception of the Kingdom as belonging to this world, and (2) by their unethical conception of *Sheol*, the place into which all men, good and bad, passed at death, which was still believed to be beyond the range of God's government and control. We must look beyond prophetism for the solving of this hard mystery. We find it in the apocalyptic literature which lies outside the canon of the Old Testament, of which, however, certain fragments were incorporated into the fabric of the prophetic writings at a later date. These fragments have only recently been identified and disentangled. Their discovery has greatly simplified the handling of the problem of future destiny as developed in pre-Christian times.

## V

What do we mean by *Apocalyptic?*

According to the older view, between Malachi and the Christian era there were four hundred "years of silence," during which we find no inspired writer, and no development of religious thought and experience, on the conclusion of which Christianity sprang full-armed into being. We owe this crude and unreal notion to the action of the Pharisees, who closed the canon of their sacred Scriptures prematurely by an arbitrary act which had disastrous consequences. From this time on no new voice was officially listened to as an authentic guide to religious truth: "the Law contained all truth," to which nothing could be added, and from which nothing could be taken away. This artificial restriction of the free movement of God's spirit could not stifle the prophetic souls who from time to time felt impelled to deal with the many involved problems which in the canonical Scriptures were left hanging in the air, and so we find a succession of writers who wrote pseudonymously—*i.e.*, under assumed names which were chosen from among the recognised worthies of previous times, in order to gain the public ear.[1] Their books were written from many standpoints and for different purposes, sometimes political, but mainly religious, with a view to hearten the devout under the stress of persecution or discouragement. These "apocalytic" writings cover some centuries of time, and form a most interesting chapter in the development of religion, being of supreme

[1] See Charles, *Between the Testaments* (Home University Library), pp. 37 *et seq.*

importance as a preparation for the rise of Christianity, as well as of later Judaism.[1]

The Hebrew prophets, as we have just seen, left the eschatology of the nation and that of the individual in a state of disharmony. Prophetism having no doctrine of future existence, except in Sheol, away from the power and grace of God, was in no position to do this. It could promise a blessed future for the nation, but could give no hope for the individual unless he happened to be alive at the Great Day which was to inaugurate the golden age.

It was the function of Apocalyptic to take up this and other unsolved problems of faith, and view them in the glow of the transfigured doctrine of God which gained ever-increasing hold on the spiritual consciousness of pious Israelites. The misfortunes of the nation, and the ever-receding fulfilment of its hopes for political rehabilitation, threw them back on God, in the feeling of whose fellowship they found peace and strength. Viewed from this centre of spiritual experience, every subject was illumined with a new light, and faith passed into a higher phase. Four distinctive doctrines which in Christianity came to their full development are traceable directly to apocalyptic—that of personal immor-

[1] Charles considers the years between 180 B.C. and the birth of Jesus, the two most interesting fruitful centuries in the history of Israel. No New Testament scholar can understand the New Testament as "the culmination of the past" [apart from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament] "nor can the Jew explain how Talmudic Judaism came to possess its higher conceptions of the future life, unless he studies this literature as the sequel of the Old Testament." (*Between the Testaments*, p. 45.)

tality in communion with God, the expectation of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, the idea that this was to be inaugurated not by a gradual evolution, but by a catastrophic personal act of God, and that larger view of history which penetrates to the spiritual principles at work, and which gives it its moral and spiritual value for edification, confidence in God, and hope of infinite betterment for mankind at large. We are here concerned only with the first of these doctrines.

Though the apocalyptic literature did not rise till prophetism, in the technical sense, had almost passed away, it was its direct descendant, and its roots lie deep in the Old Testament. One of the impelling causes of the movement was the non-fulfilment of early prophecies of doom on the nation for its sins. Thus Ezekiel (xxxviii. 6, 16, 17) re-edits the unfulfilled prophecy of Jeremiah (iii.-vi.) of a great invasion from the north, and adjourns its fulfilment. This process goes on right through the apocalyptic centuries, especially in regard to the long-deferred Messianic Kingdom, and can be seen at work even in New Testament times (*e.g.*, in some passages of St. Paul's writings and in 2 Peter). Duhm thus calls Ezekiel the spiritual founder of apocalyptic. The section of the Old Testament which illustrates this principle most vividly is the Book of Daniel (*circa* 160 B.C. by an entirely apocalyptic writer), whose place in the canon was only secured because, though really pseudonymous, it was believed to have come from the ancient prophet of that name.

## VI

We find the problem of personal immortality dealt with *ad hoc* in two apocalyptic psalms in the Old Testament, with a view to a solution of the dissonance between the spiritual experience and outward lot of the writers (Ps. xlix. and lxxiii.). In these the holy and righteous Jahweh is represented as concerned in the fate of good men, and as extending his jurisdiction over Sheol, the abode of the dead, which figures for the first time as a place of retribution for the wicked, and from which He is able to rescue the righteous man (*cf.* Ps. xlix., verses 12, 14, with verses 10, 15). The burden of Psalm lxxiii. is the perplexity caused by the earthly prosperity of the wicked, which makes them glory in a blasphemous pride of heart (verses 9-12), while the righteous is often plagued unjustly (verses 13, 14) and is tempted to rebel against his lot (verse 15). An insight into the "mysteries of God," however, steadies the psalmist's heart (verse 17), and enables him to realise how superficial is the good fortune of the wicked. For soon they will be overwhelmed in destruction (verses 17-19), while the good man is taken up into fellowship with God, which is unbroken even by death (verses 23, 24, 26). This is the high-water mark of faith in a future life in the Old Testament. Henceforth the sovereignty of God is recognised over the dead as well as the living; the idea of Sheol is fully ethicised; and the future life is recognised as the theatre where the moral issues of this life proceed to full development. Theism has at last come to its own. From this time on there is no looking back.

The next phase was the co-ordination of the fate of

the nation and that of the individual. It was not till the third or (according to Charles) the beginning of the second century B.C. that these two ideas, which had hitherto pursued a separate course, were seen to be complementary doctrines. *Hence arose the notion of a resurrection of the righteous*, which in the first form was to take place in order that they might enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom, so that the righteous nation and the righteous man should be blessed together in the coming Messianic reign. "The common lesson of such a development was that the individual was not to be blessed *apart* from his brethren . . . his highest blessedness, his highest well-being was impossible except through the common life."[1] At first this idea of resurrection was held to involve a return to earth in a glorified state for the enjoyment of mundane prosperity.[2] Till then there was no fellowship between the righteous dead and their fellows, nor even with God Himself. But later this was felt to be unreal, and the heathen doctrine of Sheol, where God had no dealings with the dead, was replaced by that of Paradise, and heaven, as the abode of the righteous after death, so that here was no longer any interruption in the communion of the faithful with God. This resurrection is the prerogative of the faithful, and results only from the fact that they are already in spiritual fellowship with God, so that the resurrec-

[1] Charles, *Between the Testaments*, p. 52.

[2] Isaiah xxvi. 19. It is now held that chapters xxiv.-xxvii. of Isaiah probably contain a pseudonymous work incorporated into Isaiah at a late date. According to Duhm it was written in the third century B.C., or even in the second. See Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, pp. 126-8, and *Between the Testaments*, p. 113.

tion-life is but the continuance in the after-state of a relation already established in this. "Thus the spiritual resurrection can already be experienced on this side of the grave—a belief which suggests the Johannine doctrine of Eternal Life as something altogether transcending time (see John vi. 54, xvii. 3). In the earlier apocalyptic there was no resurrection of the wicked (*cf.* Isa. xxiv.-xxvii.). Their fate was to be for ever in Sheol, the idea of which was intensified into a Gehenna of fire, in which they remained for ever in torment, without hope of release (*cf.* Luke xvi. 24). Later, according to some writers, they also were to undergo resurrection, but only in order that they might undergo judgment for their sins before being banished to the place of punishment (*cf.* Daniel xii. 2). But this idea did not mature into a definite doctrine during the centuries that followed. Even in the case of St. Paul it is doubtful if he believed in the resurrection of the unjust."[1] In any case the idea remained inoperative.

So far, the eschatology of the righteous nation or community involved an earthly Kingdom to be estab-

[1] There is at least no such resurrection in 1 and 2 Thess. It is doubtful if his theory of a spiritual body (the result of the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit) permits such an idea, for how could the wicked possess a "spiritual" body; and since they lost their "psychic" body at death, there could be nothing for them but to be found "naked" (*cf.* 2 Cor. v. 2, 3) and to remain disembodied spirits. (See Charles, *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 394.) If this is true of Paul, the statement attributed to him by Luke (Acts xxiv. 15) must be a mistake. Apart from that the idea of a resurrection for the wicked occurs in the New Testament only in John v. 28, 29 (which is out of keeping with the context, and is probably an interpolation), and Rev. xx. 12, 13, which is found in the Jewish portion of the book.

lished at the millennium, into which the risen righteous would be translated in a glorious body. In view of the convulsions that were taking place in history, and the corrupt state of morals everywhere, however, the earth came to be regarded as unfit for the Divine Kingdom, and the hope of the righteous was gradually transferred from a Kingdom of material splendour to a spiritual and heavenly Kingdom in which the righteous were to be as the angels, and become the companions of the heavenly hosts. This took place about 100 B.C. "It was taught by many that the Messianic Kingdom was to be merely of temporary duration, and that the goal of the risen righteous was to be—not this temporary kingdom or millennium—but heaven itself. This conception, combined with kindred apocalyptic beliefs, begat an attitude of detachment from the world." The faithful while in the world were not of it. This temper of apocalyptic (but not of prophecy) finds its expression in the New Testament in the words, "Here we have no continuing city," "We look for a city whose builder and maker is God," "For ye have not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, etc., . . . but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, etc."

Summing up this long evolution of Jewish thought concerning the Last Things, a few great truths stand out as the precious outcome of apocalyptic thought and reflection. The three chief notes of the coming Kingdom of God are—First, this kingdom is to be a kingdom *within* man—and so far a kingdom to be realised on earth (in a spiritual community of the faithful).

Secondly, *it was to be world-wide* and would ignore every limitation of language and race. Thirdly, it was to *find its true consummation in the world to come.*[1] Out of all the tangle of thought and extravagance of imagery in the literature of apocalyptic, these three principles shine forth like stars in a murky sky. It is of supreme significance for us that *these are the three essential features of the eschatology of Jesus and of His Apostles.* The long travail of thought, rising out of the pressures and sorrows of the experience of the people of God, has issued in these constructive tenets concerning the future life. It is the contribution of spiritual Judaism to the New Faith into whose inheritance we have entered. How far it is appropriated by that Faith, and how far transformed into something still finer, will be our task to consider in the following chapters.

[1] Charles, *Between the Testaments,* p. 71.

# CHAPTER II

## JESUS AND THE FUTURE LIFE

"Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very Man, and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the One God, all in all,
King of Kings, and Lord of lords,
As his servant John received the words,
'I died and live for evermore!'"

BROWNING: *Easter Day.*

## CHAPTER II

### JESUS AND THE FUTURE LIFE

"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him."—JESUS.

AS has been shown in the previous chapter, the religious society into which Jesus was born was oppressed by a mass of confused and undigested speculations regarding future destiny, through which ran certain bright threads of noble faith, but which had no unifying principle round which men's thoughts could gather into something like harmony. Certain heathen nations still clung to the notion of the life after death; the Deistic strain which had crept into later Judaism had interposed a whole hierarchy of angelic and demonic intermediaries between living men and the living God, and so had obscured the essential moral issues; and while a small remnant of pious people still clung firmly to the faith that they were in immediate communion with God, and believed in His sovereign care and love for the souls of those who had died in fellowship with Him, even they were weighed down with the pressure of manifold superstitions which had no relation to the central doctrine of their religion, and hindered a full realisation of its comfort and joy.

When we enter the circle of New Testament thought

on this subject, we feel like travellers who, having long wandered in a dense forest, traversed only by dark and uncertain paths, and through whose heavy foliage but few glimpses have been seen of the blue heavens above, find themselves suddenly under the open sky, and face to face with a clear landscape. There still remain here and there dark shadows of fear, precipitous chasms of uncertainty, and a weedy tangle of traditional notions to impede our free passage, but we are at last walking in the light of day, and have only to adjust our vision to the outlook, to distinguish between fact and fancy, temporary illusion and stable reality. It will be our task in this and the next chapter to strike a clear path to the essential teaching of the New Testament on the problem of the future life. In order to do so we must examine as carefully as the limits of space permit, the materials provided by the Synoptic, Pauline, and Johannine literature on the subject.

## I

It is needless to elaborate our fundamental position in starting, that New Testament thought in all its developments finds its creative germ and its controlling principle in the person and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is true for all departments of Christian thought. In Him we come face to face, in a unique and incomparable way, with the living God in His saving operation on the human soul. This is not to under-estimate the work done for us by the great seers, prophets and apocalyptists of preceding ages, all of whom added something to the authentic vision of God.

We do not, however, and we cannot, tender to them the homage we feel due to Jesus. His place and function are different. Scattered rays come to us through them of the uncreated light; in Him it comes to us full-orbed. Those point to a God dimly seen, too far away; they are on *this* side of the great dividing line between deity and humanity: we have to pass beyond their hesitant and partial vision in order to reach the Great Father. He is still *there*, and we are *here*. But in Jesus the chasm between God and man has closed up; in our search for God we have at last arrived; there is no *beyond* to torment our tired and aching souls; no sense of a distance still to be traversed, of a separating river yet to be crossed. By His revelation of the Father, which is not *through* Him but *in* Him, He has "brought life and immortality to light by His gospel." If then we can but reach the pure and authentic message of Jesus on the problem of the future life, we have come to the last word that is possible for us on this side of the obscuring veil of death. But in order to reach that message in its purity, it is true that we have to exercise a reverent but reasoned criticism. The "glory of the Son" was manifested under the limitations of space and time, of human temperament, of historical environment. The Incarnation, like all earthly happenings, was conditioned by its essential *function—i.e.*, in Jesus God was manifested in so far as, and in no further than, was possible in a complete and holy human life, and for the particular end of revealing the Father in His saving power. This does not in any way invalidate or qualify the sufficiency of that revelation. For all that concerns the ends of human salvation He perfectly fulfilled His

function; His teaching, though couched in the terms of His own generation, was for all time and peoples; His work as Redeemer was complete and sufficient for every human need; in His person He was the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very image of His substance. But we may hold this faith in all its essential purity, and yet feel bound to handle the historical problems clustering round the Incarnation with a devout freedom. Those who know Him by faith, and who have entered into the "power of His resurrection," need have no fear that a sincere handling of the literary materials at our disposal will rob us of any of our spiritual heritage in Him, or endanger our experience of His love and grace. That being secure, we need feel no anxious care about lesser things; for "He that hath the Son hath the Father" also. Less than this we cannot ask for, more than this we cannot have. "This is life eternal—to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent."

## II

In this spirit let us examine the "eschatological" outlook attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. We begin with a few general characteristics.

1. The teaching of Jesus concerning the future life is nowhere elaborated into a carefully stated doctrine. His main interest was the salvation of individuals and the founding of a redeemed society in this life, with more or less incidental reference to its consummation in the life to come. The main positions as regards that other life are rather of the nature of implicit inference than of direct statement. We have therefore to gather

our materials for a considered view as best we may from these indirect and fragmentary utterances.

2. It is clear, however, that behind all the teaching of our Lord concerning this present life lies the clear and unvarying postulate of a future life for all men, which He may, in a sense, be said to have inherited from the pious circle in which He was brought up. This is clear also from His uncompromising attitude towards the Sadducees, who denied the "resurrection" life. Emerson says somewhere that there are scarcely half a dozen direct references in the words of Jesus to a life beyond the grave. This may be so, but the inference he appeared to draw from this fact, that He was lacking in any crucial interest in that life, is grotesquely wrong. The comparative silence of our Lord on the subject in His recorded words was due simply to the fact that immortality was no matter of uncertainty, much less of indifference either to Him or His hearers, but a postulate of faith which no one in that generation doubted except those sceptics who once drew so confident an affirmation to the contrary from Him in controversy (Matt. xxii. 31, 32). We may say that our Lord's whole outlook on life presupposes or assumes as unquestionable the fact of a life after death for all mankind. His teaching would lose its nerve-centre if that belief were shown to be fallacious.

3. Our Lord's faith in immortality, however, was no mere *naïve* inheritance from the past. While His teaching on this subject certainly took its colour and much of its form from the current ideas and language of His own day, and cannot be understood apart from those ideas, it stands on an independent foundation.

It came to Him neither from the Essenes with their "strange mixture of severe Pharisaism, rudimentary Gnosticism, and foreign mysticism,"[1] nor from Rabbinical thought, for His teaching was wholly alien to the genius of Rabbinism. There was a note of certainty in His attitude peculiar to Himself, and derived from no other source than the deeps of His own personal insight and experience. In so far as it had any outward source it had its roots in the revelation of the Old Testament, especially as developed along the lines of apocalyptic thought, with whose vocabulary His own is deeply tinged. But all He had received from the past was but the matrix in which His own personal and unique revelation of the Father was quickened. His characteristic utterances on the subject were clearly derived from immediate intuition and a sure knowledge.

4. We here come to a point ever to be clearly borne in mind. The language in which Jesus expressed his ideas was not the abstract vocabulary of the schools, but the concrete speech of the home, the market-place, the street. His mode of expression—so well suited to the oral method of teaching which He practised—was simple, concrete, pictorial and characterised by a pregnant brevity.[2] He did not develop His thought systematically, but in a fragmentary and spontaneous manner, as need demanded, and occasion offered. His discourses, parables, and table-talk must therefore be read in the large free way alone suitable to popular imaginative speech. His reticence and even silence must also be recognised on many points which, with a

[1] Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 287.
[2] See the writer's *The Master and His Method*, pp. 52-58.

more systematic teacher, we should have expected to find fully developed. And the fact that his method was conditioned both as to its content and its method by the practical religious needs of His audiences, will explain much of the allusiveness and elusiveness of His teaching. He did not build up his hearers' faith from the foundation, but assumed the great central truths which he shared in common with them, and gave Himself to the transformation of these truths into the higher values of His own revelation.

5. Finally, let it be freely recognised that the moulds into which the contents of the Gospel were run in the first instance were of temporary validity and have no permanent significance.

In other words, the terms in which the fresh and living message of Jesus concerning the mind and will of God for man was expressed came from the current vocabulary of apocalyptic Judaism. The key words of the popular religion of His time were the *Kingdom of God*, *Messiah*, *Son of Man*, *Son of God*, *Resurrection*, *Judgment*, *the Last Day*, *the Restoration of All Things*, *the New Heavens and Earth*, etc., and these He uses freely in His Teaching. A vast amount of learned research has been recently expended as to the origin and meaning of these terms. How far are we to believe that Jesus Himself shared in the popular conceptions thus expressed? How far did He use them as vehicles for the expression of ideas which, when once they were fairly launched on their way, would break the temporary moulds into which they were run, and assert their spiritual independence and sovereignty?

These are among the most difficult questions of

modern interpretation. It is clear that the Evangelists felt that the personality of Jesus soared high above all power of expression in the categories at their disposal. They make no attempt to explain or to account for Him. There was a secret in His life that eluded their analysis, a hidden factor in His consciousness which defied their search. Nor does He ever seem to have made any attempt to enlighten them on the meaning of this mystery. There are, however, two utterances of His recorded in Matthew which give us a suggestive clue. The first is found in Matthew xi. 27: "All things have been delivered to me of the Father; and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; *neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.*" The second occurs in Matthew xxiv. 36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of Heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father only." The first of these passages manifestly refers to knowledge of the nature and purpose of God towards humanity; the second to the time and occasion of the Parousia or Second Coming of the Son of Man. As regards the former kind of knowledge—*i.e.*, spiritual knowledge—Jesus claims final and exclusive authority; He is the unique and authentic Revealer of the Father. As regards the second—*i.e.*, knowledge of future events in the world of time and space—He confesses that He shares in the ignorance of other men; He knows no more than they do, and has to depend for His forecast on the same faculties and power of insight as is possessed by them. This gives us the key to much in the Gospels which is otherwise not only mysterious, but in-

comprehensible, namely the evident fact that in certain matters, Jesus spoke with absolute and unquestioning authority, whereas in other directions He seems to depend on the ordinary sources of information available to all men. If we put these facts together, I think we shall find light pouring in on the perplexity felt by many devout believers in meeting the contention so frequently made by modern students of the Gospels, that, while as regards the revelation made by Jesus of the saving purpose of God towards men He speaks the final and commanding word, in certain other matters, *e.g.*, those relating to the apocalyptic programme of His life, He shared at least to some extent in the views of His contemporaries.[1] If Jesus Himself confessed to such a distinction between the substance and the form of His revelation, we cannot go far wrong in giving these words (which are by universal consent genuine and authentic) their full and natural meaning, and in recognising the human limitations of His function as the Incarnate Word. To do so is in no wise to allow the position of Professor A. Schweitzer, who, in his book on *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, not only emphasises the fact that Jesus changed His early views as to the imminence of the Kingdom which He preached (which many writers of the Evangelical school now accept as a fact), but that He was slain in a wild attempt to force the Divine hand to hurry on the coming of the kingdom through His death!

If these characteristics of our Lord's method of imparting spiritual enlightenment are borne in mind, we shall escape many of the pitfalls into which some

[1] See Charles, *Critical History of a Future Life*, p. 332.

exegetes have fallen in the past, and understand why so much is included which might otherwise seem to us superfluous, and so much left out which we would gladly have found there. He spoke to His own age and people as they were able to bear it, and we must be content to reinterpret His recorded words according to *our* knowledge and need, and exercise a reverent imagination in unfolding the implicit content of His central truths.

III

The doctrine regulative of our Lord's teaching concerning the "last things" is found, as in the Old Testament, in the revelation of God in His redeeming activity. He based His teaching of a future existence not on the nature of Man, but on the character of God as the Holy Father. Eternal life was the free gift of the Lord of all life, in whose favour and fellowship alone is any life worth living. To come into such relation with Him as to share lovingly in that quickening and ennobling fellowship is to be redeemed from death as well as sin. His own function was to reveal that Father in such wise that by fellowship with Himself, this fellowship with the Father was secured. This revelation of the Father was made by Jesus, not only through His teaching concerning Him, but through His own conscious relationship to Him, and through His sufferings, death and resurrection. We are here at the heart of the Gospel; this is what it means, and this is what it does; and this carries all else with it. When we have once experienced this redeeming love of God in Jesus Christ, we have reached the end for which we and the Gospel

exist. What remains is secondary, both as to the thought-forms in which the Gospel is expressed in the New Testament, and the revisions through which these thought-forms have since passed down to our own day.

2. Our Lord's completely moralised doctrine of God accounts for His completely moralised doctrine of Man. The value of the human soul consisted for Him in its capacity for fellowship with the Holy God as Father. In *posse*, if not in *esse*, he is the child of God, and as such of infinite worth. Whether He believed man to be essentially immortal we have no means of determining; what is sure is that for Him Eternal Life consisted in a spiritual relation of dependence on God, and of obedience to His will. His teaching unquestionably implies continued *existence* apart from this; but in the vocabulary of Jesus such an existence would not be life in any true sense. It was the Father's good pleasure to bestow this life on all who would fulfil the conditions, and the prime conditions were: first, a prayerful and loving spiritual receptivity, and then, a patient persistence in well-doing. Anything that interfered with this end was to be put aside with firm resolution. For this higher good every lower good must be surrendered: a man must sell all that he had that he might buy this boundless treasure and possess this pearl of great price. If his eye offended him, it must be plucked out; if his hand or his foot, he must cut it off and cast it from him; for it was better, He said, to enter "life" halt, or lame, or with one eye, than having two eyes or hands and feet to be "cast into everlasting fire."

3. It is characteristic of the thought of Jesus concerning this higher or "eternal" life that it was an

essentially social and not a merely individual good. This is the Christ-idea of the Kingdom of God, which was a community of souls joined in a human-divine fellowship, in which alone all the functions of a completely equipped spiritual life could be fulfilled, and God's will be perfectly done. Such a Kingdom He had come to found, and for its realisation He freely laid down His life.

Let us dwell for a moment on His idea of the Kingdom of God. It was a notion, as we have already seen, that had been hovering for centuries on the horizon of the devout Hebrew mind, first as a political programme, then as an apocalyptic vision, lastly, with some of the choicer minds, as a great spiritual emancipation. In the hands of Jesus its earthly associations were finally washed away, and it stood forth as a purely spiritual ideal. We venture here to repeat the suggestive summary of the Old Testament and apocalyptic programmes of the Kingdom given by Professor Charles, which has been already referred to in the previous chapter (pp. 136, 137). First we have the idea primarily formulated by Jeremiah, that the Kingdom was to be *within* man. God's law was to be written on man's heart (Jer. xxxi. 31-33), and man's soul was to be the dwelling-place of the Most High (Isa. lvii. 15). Secondly, *it was to be world-wide*, embracing all the nations of the earth. And, thirdly, while in the earlier prophets the scene was to be on earth, and later in a transformed heaven and earth, to be attained by gradual transformation, about the close of the second century, owing to the "growing dualism of the times, it was borne in alike on saint and sage that this present world could never be the scene of the Eternal Kingdom,

and that *such a Kingdom demanded*, not merely a new heaven and a new earth akin in character to the old, but *a new and spiritual heaven and earth into which flesh and blood could not find an entrance.* Thus the Messianic Kingdom can attain its consummation only in the world to come, into which the righteous should enter through the gate of resurrection."[1] This last conception of the Kingdom was to be attained not by a gradual transformation, but by a personal catastrophic act on the part of God.

Now, says Professor Charles, these are the three notes of Old Testament prophecy and apocalyptic which characterise the Kingdom as introduced by our Lord. First, while the apocalyptic note of a future Kingdom to be realised partly in this world, and partly in the world to come, appears in the teaching of Christ, to which He looked forward with intense expectancy, there is also a presentation of the Kingdom as something inwardly realised here and now—"the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 20, 21). Secondly, Christ's Kingdom is to be universal (Matt. xxi. 43, viii. 11, 12; *cf.* xiii. 38), a characteristic which follows from the first; for, if character is to be the sole qualification for admission into the Kingdom, then, wherever that characteristic is to be found, there the Kingdom is already. And, finally, it was to be consummated in the risen life (Matt. xiii. 43) through the supreme agency of God Himself. We thus see that the Kingdom established by Christ corresponds to and carries forward on a higher plane the deepest aspects foreshadowed in the prophetic and apocalyptic writers.

[1] *Between the Testaments*, pp. 68-71.

This completely ethicises and spiritualises the permanent elements in the past developments, and "fuses them into one organic whole."[1]

## IV

It remains for us to view in brief detail such suggestions as our sources contain of our Lord's doctrine concerning the fate of individual souls in the future life.

The first impression that a careful study of our Lord's teaching on this subject produces is *the fateful significance of this present life in its relation to the future state.* Our earthly life is *par excellence* the sphere of moral opportunity, where character is developed in a series of ethical choices, of which the supreme case is our attitude to the offer of salvation made in the Gospel of the grace of God. We carry with us the issues of that choice, for weal or woe, into the world to come. The fate of those who have come to a full knowledge of this Gospel is judged by their reception or rejection of it (Mark x. 15; *cf.* Matt. xviii. 34). The darkest cloud,[2] in any case, hangs over the future lot of those who knowingly reject it.[3] There is a Kingdom of light and

[1] *Between the Testaments,* pp. 72-73.

[2] If we may take the parable of Lazarus and Dives as a pictorial statement of our Lord's views, we must conclude that there is nothing in the conditions governing the life to come to suggest that those who have had a full opportunity of surrendering to the Gospel in this life, and who deliberately reject it, will be likely to reverse their decision in the life to come.

[3] The reverberating sound of the waves of destiny on the far shores of life and death, and the song of deliverance of the redeemed, the echo of ultimate anguish and loss, mingle with all our Lord's references to this solemn subject.

love and blessedness awaiting those hereafter who join the kingdom of redeemed souls in the life that now is. This seems to us to be the essence of the eschatological teaching of our Lord. One of the things that strikes one forcibly in His references to the future life is that *He never refers to it except to press home the supreme moral significance of the life that now is*, and of the issues in eternity that depend on what we are in time. This, indeed, is the necessary corollary of our Lord's doctrine of the holiness and love of God, of the worth and dignity of the human soul, and of the fateful significance of the passing but pregnant opportunities for spiritual growth and service in our earthly experience. In this doctrine of the Last Things, He brought to its logical conclusion the great movement of revelation concerning God and Man in their spiritual relations which began away back in the distant centuries, and which came to fruition in Him. In His teaching, the final word has been spoken.

This brief statement, however, is incomplete until we examine the imagery drawn from contemporaneous Jewish thought in which Jesus clothes His reference to the future life. The keywords of this imagery are *Kingdom of God*, *Resurrection*, *Parousia* or the *Second Coming of the Son of Man*, *Judgment*, *Paradise*, *Hades*, *Gehenna*. These were all familiar terms in the religious vocabulary of His day, and He uses them freely to express His ideas.

*Kingdom of God.* We have already briefly dealt with this word; here it is enough to point out that it expresses on the social side what *life* or *Eternal Life* means for the individual life. Thus to "inherit" life

(Mark x. 17), or to "enter into life" (Mark ix. 43-45) seems to be synonymous with "inherit the Kingdom" (Matt. xxv. 34) or to "enter into the Kingdom" (Mark ix. 47; Luke xviii. 24). So closely are these terms related that the only difference is that in the one case salvation is viewed from the personal side, while the Kingdom represents the same fact from the side of the society of the redeemed, in fellowship with which the individual can alone attain to his full inheritance of life. An isolated, individualistic salvation is not to be found anywhere in the spiritual horizon of Jesus.

*Parousia.* The current idea that the Kingdom of God would be inaugurated on earth and completed in Heaven appears to have been accepted by our Lord. Mr. H. W. Garrod in his suggestive (but unequal) book, *The Religion of all Good Men*, differentiates these two forms of *Parousia* as the apocalyptic (or sudden and disruptive) and the *eschatological* or remoter, which was to be led up to by a process of gradual spiritual evolution.[1] The question how far the former was identical in the mind of Jesus with the popular expectation of a literal coming of the Son of Man "on the clouds of heaven" (a phrase He Himself uses) is variously answered; but it is clear that *in some sense* He expected the Kingdom to come "with power" in the lifetime of some who heard Him speak. In its physical spectacular sense this hope was unquestionably doomed to disappointment. It is equally unquestionable that this did not in any way sap the motive power of the

[1] This is the conception of the Parousia at which Paul arrived in the last stage of his eschatological development. (See next chapter, pp. 178-181.)

Christian faith in those who underwent this disappointment. In some deeper and more effectual sense Jesus *did* "come again" and in "great power." Many exegetes (notably Professors Sanday and Beet) hold that His prediction was mystically fulfilled in the coming of His spirit on the infant Church at Pentecost, the beginning of that age-long and unexhausted experience of fellowship with Him which has ever since been the nerve-centre of power in the Christian community, and which involves a disruptive change of centre from the life of the flesh (ἐν σαρκί) to the life of the spirit (ἐν Χριστῷ). If this interpretation of the words of our Lord is valid, it meets many difficulties, and accounts better than any other theory for the triumph of faith over disappointment in the early ages of Christianity.

*Resurrection.* The Kingdom, though inaugurated on earth, was not to find its consummation here, but in the life to come. This involved a Resurrection, in which the good people who had been looking and working for the Kingdom, but who had died before its arrival, would be raised from the dead, and pass in the fulness of a glorified life into a state of blessedness beyond. The resurrection life was not to be a mere repetition of this. The relation of sex was to be abolished (Mark xii. 24, 25 and parallels), and the redeemed were to be "as the angels in heaven" (though what exactly that may mean is not clear). The phrases "eating and drinking," as applied to that life, must of course be interpreted in a figurative sense, implying a society in which the fellowship above should be joyfully social and full of mutual spiritual satisfaction. Jesus Himself, as in the earthly society, was to be the central

figure, "that where I am ye may be also"—*i.e.*, in renewed and loving fellowship, which was, according to John, the crowning thought in the happy prospect before His people. This Resurrection Life was the reward of the holy and obedient life on earth, and was in a sense an "attainment" (the righteous are those "accounted to be *worthy* to attain that world and the resurrection of the dead," Luke xx. 35). Does this mean that in the view of our Lord there is no "resurrection" for the wicked? This seems to be the logical issue in the general scheme of thought, at least according to the first two Evangelists, though in the above passage in Luke room is left to infer the contrary, and (unless we agree that certain passages are an interpolation) in the Johannine Gospel.

*Judgment.* There is a continuous and a final judgment taught by Christ according to the Synoptists. The continuous judgment is that involved in our Lord's power to pronounce His verdict on the conduct of unbelieving cities (Matt. xi. 21-24, xxiii. 37, 38; Luke xiii. 34, xix. 41-44) and on those who reject and deny Him before men (Matt. x. 32, 33). But the final judgment is to be one of the features of the Parousia (Matt. xxv. 32; Luke vi. 23, x. 12, xxi. 34) when every man shall receive according to his deeds (Matt. xvi. 27), and shall be judged according to the reception he has given to the Son of Man or His representatives when on earth. The Parable of Judgment in Matthew xxv. is an imaginative picture of the principles according to which all men, whether they have come to a knowledge of Him in this life or not, shall be judged at the Last Day

Three words familiar enough in that generation, but

obscure to us, remain briefly to be considered—*Paradise*, *Hades* (or hell), and *Gehenna*.

Hades (translated in the Authorised Version by "hell") is the New Testament word corresponding to *Sheol* in the Old Testament. It does not refer to the place where the wicked are finally punished, as in our own traditional circle of ideas, but an intermediate state where the righteous and the wicked are to abide till the final judgment.[1] This at least seems to have been the general Jewish idea. *Paradise*, the term used by Him in His words to the dying thief, is part of the same system of words, but whether He thought of it as a heavenly place of rest and peace, or as the better side of Sheol or Hades, it is impossible to determine. *Gehenna*, however, it is clear, represents the place of final punishment for the wicked, being the "word in the Jewish Apocalypses applied to the place of punishment at the Great Day of Wrath." It was a state of torment for wicked angels and men (used first in this sense in the Book of Enoch), and which was their last and irrevocable place of destiny.

[1] This, however, is denied by Salmond (*Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 350), who says that the two terms, Hades and Paradise, as used (once each only) in the Synoptic teaching, give us no right to infer that Jesus taught the doctrine of an Intermediate State. "His teaching rather overleaps the period of man's story which intervenes between death and the risen life."

## V

Such was the framework into which fell the few but solemn references in the teaching of Jesus regarding future life and destiny. How far is this framework authoritative for us to-day? It belongs to a circle of ideas entirely alien from our own modern world-view. We cannot without a supreme effort think ourselves back into them; they are indeed a part of a cosmology which the human mind has utterly outgrown. When we examine into the history of the terms used, we find that some are derived from heathen sources far back in the primitive history of the race, or from contact with the peoples among whom the deported Hebrews sojourned in Babylon. Further, they are terms whose significance was in a state of continual flux and uncertainty; scarcely any two Apocalyptists understand them in the same sense, and in not a few cases the same writer uses them in more than one meaning.

It seems therefore to be our duty to make a sharp distinction between the *form* of our Lord's teaching concerning the future life and its *spiritual significance*. His own oral method of teaching, by tropes and similes and popular parables, forced Him to make use of the religious terms current in His day, and so clothe His Gospel message in words that should be "understanded of the people." Only so could He reach their hearts and instruct their minds. If He lived in our own day, He would speak to us in the same pictorial way: but He

would use terms derived from the vocabulary of the Stock Exchange, of modern industry, of the halls of science, of the philosophy of evolution, possibly of the Psychical Research Society; for only so could His words come home to us with convincing power. And in both cases the intellectual moulds would be liable to revision and supersession, as men's minds continued to move intellectually to another plane and new language was coined to correspond with fresh "working ideas." The essential truths would be expressed sufficiently for practical purposes in either form, but must not be identified with it. In the eschatology of Jesus therefore, what is *authoritative is not the Messianic programme outlined therein, but the moral and spiritual verities dimly and imperfectly suggested by His words and figures;* and these have to be disentangled from their temporary expression by careful study and faithful spiritual insight. In this way we are saved once more from the bondage of the letter, and escape into the freedom of the spirit.

The truth of this position may be further noted if we follow the fate of these terms in the later literature of the New Testament. The Epistles of Paul show that the eschatological framework of the Gospels was even in his day passing through a sea-change, and when we examine the latest Pauline Epistles we find that it has already passed through a complete transformation, without, indeed, losing its inner and abiding significance. This suggests that we are most faithful to Him, not when we enslave ourselves to the form of His teaching, but when we allow it to take possession of our

minds by its inner power, to be reclothed in the forms of our own thought, philosophical, scientific, and religious.

Let us address ourselves, then, to the later literature of the New Testament, and watch the process of transformation at work, especially in the vivid and revealing letters of St. Paul.

# CHAPTER III

## THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH AND THE FUTURE LIFE

"My Father's House on high,
Home of my soul how near,
At times to faith's far-seeing eye
Thy golden gates appear:
Ah! then my spirit faints
To reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above.

"I hear at morn and even,
At noon and midnight hour,
The choral harmonies of heaven
Earth's babel tongues o'erpower.
Then, then I feel that He,
Remembered or forgot,
The Lord is never far from me,
Though I perceive Him not."

J. MONTGOMERY.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH AND THE FUTURE LIFE

"O Paradise! O Paradise! The world is growing old;
Who would not be at rest and free where love is never cold?
Where loyal hearts and true, stand ever in the light,
All rapture thro' and thro' in God's most holy sight."

FABER.

I

IN the Synoptics we have a presentation of the teaching of Jesus concerning future destiny to His contemporaries; in the Epistles of St. Paul and of other New Testament writers we find ourselves in a world where this teaching is seen at work in its transforming and inspiring power.

Between the two periods, however, an event took place so revolutionary and creative in character that it changed the whole tone and perspective of thought. That event was the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Whatever be our view to-day of the nature of that event —whether that it involved the resuscitation of the earthly body of Jesus, and its transmutation into a "spiritual body," or that the event was a purely spiritual objective reappearance, or even that it was a series of subjective visions—there can be no manner of doubt of its effect on the mind of the Primitive Church. In every sense this great mystery was the creative germ of historical Christianity. It threw a backward and illuminating

light on the whole teaching and work of Jesus; it glorified His cross of shame, and turned it into the symbol of a Divine and sacrificial love; it instantly invested the person of Jesus with Divine significance; and it completely altered the vision of the future for devout believers, whether in this life or in the life to come. Henceforth it was not the Jesus of history only who filled the adoring heart of the community of the saved, but also the Jesus of the resurrection life, who from the Unseen communed through His spirit with His people—comforting them in their sorrow, reinforcing them with His grace, filling them with a sense of Divine forgiveness and of conquest over sin and circumstance; inspiring them with an undying confidence for humanity in this world, and with a sure hope, for all who loved and served Him here, that they would enjoy a glorious immortality in the next.

It is difficult for us who inherit the apostolic hope as a legacy from so many generations of faith to enter into the changed feelings of the Apostolic Church in its outlook on the future life. Until then that life, however they might clothe it in the iridescent hues of an extravagant apocalyptic, was in the last resort but a pale and ineffectual vision, having no clearly marked outlines, and no authoritative spiritual content. Their ideas concerning it were the fruit of an eager speculative interest working under the stress of a great religious need. There was, however, no objective fact or set of facts in their possession to serve as a standard or test of the validity of their dream-pictures of the future life, which were thus dependent on the moods of faith, and therefore continually changing in form and colour. With

the return of Jesus from the dead during the interval between the Crucifixion and the Pentecostal feast, this element of uncertainty gave way to a glorious confidence. Henceforth His radiant figure filled the horizon of the other life with its familiar and transforming presence. Heaven was where Jesus was, and where He reigned in gracious sovereignty. To live here was to possess His spirit, to enjoy His grace, and to serve His cause with gladness of heart; to die was "to be with Him" in a renewed personal fellowship, and so in sovereign blessedness for ever. It was surely to this experience of Jesus in His resurrection life that the writer of the Second Epistle to Timothy (who, whether Paul or not, here represents the Pauline attitude) refers when he speaks of the "holy calling" of God, given us "before the world began, but now made manifest by the appearing of Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (i. 10). Such was the revolutionary change wrought by the Resurrection of Jesus on the minds and hearts of the earliest Christian believers.

This, then, was the essence of the primitive Gospel which started Christianity on its victorious career down the ages. And this, we may add, has been its essence ever since. Many extraneous elements of belief have mingled with it from time to time, some surviving from the legacy of Jewish thought (not quite sloughed off even yet), others drawn from Gnostic and other ethnic sources as various cults and creeds came into contact and clash with it in the course of ages; but none of these are "of faith" for them or for us, and they are destined in the end to disappear, or at least to take a subordinate

and non-essential place, in the ultimate creed of Christendom. Every believer has a right to unfold the inner contents of his faith in Jesus as he thinks fit so long as he is faithful to the simplicity of the creed; some may indulge in elaborate speculative fancies concerning the future world and derive what comfort and inspiration they can from them; some will be content to leave its details in happy trust, feeling sure of little save the great foundation fact on which all else is built. Be this as it may, what gives its distinctive interest to the other world to Christian believers is this—that He who revealed the Father as holy love, and who died and rose again for human salvation, is in sovereign power *there*, as once He was *here* in humiliation and lowliness; that He is "preparing a place" for His people; and that He will receive them at last into glory.[1]

## II

Every creative germ of faith, however, must clothe itself in form; and this form it finds in the circle of beliefs amid which it is born. As we have seen, the Resurrection faith in Jesus fell into a rich matrix of

[1] In a recent newspaper symposium on Immortality, Miss Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler puts this faith in its simplicity in the following words: "My belief as to the future state is summed up in the last verse of Richard Baxter's perfect hymn:

> "'My knowledge of that life is small,
> The eye of faith is dim:
> But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
> And I shall be with Him.'

This is all I have to go upon; and it is enough." (*What Happens After Death?* p. 52.)

Apocalyptic speculations and visions. The result, as in Old Testament times, was that an elaborate system of beliefs rose in the early Church clustering round this living faith, deriving their vitality entirely from it, but threatening at times to obscure and even to smother it under an accumulation of secondary tenets. Hence arose a struggle between "faith and form," which we can see vividly in process in the apostolic literature of the New Testament, and to the examination of which it is our duty now to address ourselves.

The teaching of our Lord, as we have seen, was expressed in terms of the Apocalyptic beliefs of His day, which to some extent He appears to have shared during His earthly life. This involved a prospect of His more or less speedy return to found the Messianic Kingdom. In the first generation the popular Apocalyptic programme seems to have been taken over bodily by the infant Church and linked with an expectation of the imminent Second Coming of Jesus "on the clouds of Heaven." Its members, in other words, were one and all keen Second Adventists, and were day by day on the *qui vive* for the Great Event which filled the immediate future with such resplendent light. This mood of expectancy resulted in many extravagances of thought and speech, and induced a pronounced other-worldliness of temper. This reflects itself clearly in the literature of the time, and accounts for some of the peculiar features of early Christian ethic. The Adventist Hope, however, was doomed to perpetual disappointment, like the Hope of Israel for an earthly Kingdom, but, also like that Hope, it fulfilled a great Providential function, heartening the infant Church

amid its many persecutions and tribulations, diverting its attention from its hostile environment and its insignificant numbers, and fixing its outlook on the heavenly life as the central motive to godly living and brotherly love. As time went on, the first crude Apocalyptic programme gradually waned. Many professing Christians lost heart and faith, and slipped back into carelessness and worldliness of life. But the company of true believers were dependent on deeper sources of religious vitality, and while they never renounced their Messianic faith, it was gradually transformed into a more spiritual Hope, till in the latest writings the Apocalyptic elements almost disappear. Let us see the stages of this process as unfolded to us in the Epistles of Paul and John and Peter.

## III

We begin with St. Paul. 1. In the first period of his literary activity (1 and 2 Thess.) his Apocalyptic faith is clear and pronounced, and involves a very definite Adventist programme. We need not here trace the various strands of traditional and environal influences which made up this programme; how far it may be carried back to the Old Testament, to Paul's Pharisaic training, to Apocalyptic literature, and to the Master Himself with whose teaching Paul shows himself in many passages to be familiar.[1] Our point here is that at the outset of the period from which his extant

[1] On this subject see Professor H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things* (chap. ii., pp. 32-101, especially pp. 98-101; *cf.* also pp. 166-169).

writings date, he held a vivid, concrete, clearly outlined programme of what was to take place at the Second Coming of our Lord, to which he seems at this stage to have pinned his faith, and which He was prepared to defend as coming to him in some authoritative sense from the Lord Jesus Himself.[1] That St. Paul should have confessed himself so confidently on this subject, and should afterwards have gradually lost it without losing a particle of his distinctive Christian faith—which indeed grew continually brighter and more spiritual as the disappointing Apocalyptic visions faded into the distance—throws light on many things, and is of special value for us in trying to distinguish between what is, and what is not, of faith in our own outlook on the future life.

A careful analysis of the Pauline Apocalyptic in 1 and 2 Thessalonians will reveal three central conceptions—that of *Anti-Christ and the Great Apostasy*, that of the *Parousia and Judgment*, and that of *Resurrection and Final Destiny*. By following out the fate of these ideas in his later writings, the progress of his thinking will be clearly manifested.

(*a*) *Anti-Christ.* An examination of what is exactly meant by this idea is not necessary for our purpose, and would lead us too far afield. Enough that at this stage Paul expected a personal embodiment of the evil principle to be "revealed" immediately before the Second Coming (2 Thess. ii. 8) who would be destroyed in the

[1] *Cf.* 1 Thess. iv. 15, "For this I say unto you by the word of the Lord," etc., after which follows what has been called the "Pauline Apocalypse" (verses 15-17). "There is a setness and rigidity in the teaching of the Apostle which is not found in that of Christ" (Charles), which suggests that Paul was partly depending on other sources.

"brightness of that Coming." There was to be a great apostasy at the instigation of this arch-deceiver, which (according to Sabatier[1]) would "extend far beyond the limits of Judaism, and be the outcome of a general and hopeless revolt of the whole world against God and the order established by Him." This consummation of evil forces was to be the sign that the true Parousia of the Lord was imminent (2 Thess. ii. 1-4).

(*b*) *The Parousia.* This was to take place during the lifetime of Paul and his contemporaries (1 Thess. ii. 19; iii. 13; iv. 15; v. 23). That this would be so, is affirmed on the authority of Christ Himself ("For we tell you, *as the Lord told us*, that we the living, who survive till the Lord comes, are by no means to take precedence of those who have fallen asleep"—Moffatt's Translation). This advent, however, was to be at the last a sudden and catastrophic event; it was to arrive as "a thief in the night" ("When 'all's well' and 'all is safe' are on the lips of men, then all of a sudden Destruction is upon them, like pangs on a pregnant woman—escape there is none" (*ibid.*). The programme of the Parousia is clearly set forth. The Lord is to "descend from Heaven with a shout, and the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we be ever with the Lord." Then follows the Judgment on the quick and the dead, involving the destruction of Antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 8) and summary and final vengeance on godless and careless men, whose fate is "eternal destruction" (ὄλεθρος αἰώνιος)

[1] *St. Paul*, pp. 119-121.

or "perishing" (ἀπώλεια). There is a fierceness, not to say vindictiveness, about this picture of judgment which shows that Paul's Christian faith has not yet enabled him to slough off the Pharisaic temper of his youth, and stands in marked contrast with his attitude in the later Epistles.

(*c*) *The Resurrection and Final Destiny of the Faithful.* The idea of resurrection is demanded by the fear lest the faithful dead should not share in the blessedness of the Kingdom. The same regard for those righteous who had passed into death was (as we have seen, p. 135) the germ of the resurrection hope in the Old Testament and Apocalyptic times. Paul quiets those who are exercised on this point, by assuring them that the holy dead are to take precedence of all others at the Coming of the Lord (as a special recognition of their faithfulness in spite of disappointment?), and they are to be henceforth "for ever with the Lord" (1 Thess. v. 17) in a heavenly world, the present world being probably consigned to destruction, since it seems to have no further place in the Apostle's outlook. It is to be carefully noted that neither in these earlier nor in any of the Apostle's later writings is there any place for the resurrection of the wicked, so far as we can find out; their fate was to be "destroyed" (2 Thess. i. 9; 1 Thess. v. 6, v. 3).

Summing up this outline of Paul's earlier views, we cannot ignore the materialistic and panoramic setting of his thought concerning the Second Coming. This betrays its Jewish origin, and it proves that as yet the purely spiritual aspect of the Gospel had not permeated his mind through and through. The temper

also is uncompromising and hard; the spirit of the Master's teaching had not as yet taken precedence of the form in which it had been transmitted to him.

2. When we pass on to the next phase (after an interval of from two to four years)—that represented in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (*circa* A.D. 55), we find that a process of change had already begun. This change involved the dropping of certain elements in the earlier picture and the development of the Apostle's thought in other directions.

What disappears is all reference to the Antichrist of the Great Apostasy, which never comes forward again. What is developed is a more spiritual ethical tone (which, however, is marked enough in the Epistles to the Thessalonians), and a more detailed treatment of the Resurrection doctrine, arising out of a dispute in the Corinthian Church as to the nature of the Resurrection body. He still looks forward to the Parousia in his own life-time (1 Cor. iv. 5, xi. 26, xv. 51-52, xvi. 22), and he is consequently disposed to persuade his readers from marriage and all earthly entanglements (vii. 26, 29). This Parousia is closely related to the Final Judgment (iv. 5), and there is to be no millennial period between these two events. There is to be no resurrection except "in Christ." His resurrection and that of believers are more ethically and organically related (vi. 14, xv. 22). Professor Charles here finds Paul's theory of the *date* of the resurrection passing through a critical phase. According to his statement in 1 Cor. xv. 51-52, it is to take place at the Parousia, but according to his theory of the risen body, it should take place at death—a situation which suggests that his growing

thought is increasingly at variance with his Rabbinical tradition. In this epistle the Apostle does not seem to be conscious of the antinomy, but in the second epistle he seems to have realised something of the inconsistency of his former view, and has abandoned it in favour of the doctrine that the resurrection of the faithful follows immediately after death[1] (2 Cor. v. 1-8). As yet, however, he holds that resurrection takes place suddenly "at the last trump" (xv. 52), after which the living will be transfigured (verse 53), and the perfected Kingdom will begin in a new and glorious world. This involves the overcoming of the last enemy, death, when God will become "all in all" (xv. 25-28). All this is pressed home on his readers as an incentive to avoid every form of sin and uncleanness, and an encouragement to faithful and happy service, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (verse 58).

3. The third phase is to be found in 2 Corinthians and Romans[2] (*circa* A.D. 57 or 58).

[1] Charles, *Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life*, p. 395.

[2] Many writers of distinction decline to believe that the differences in Paul's presentation of his eschatological views in 1 and 2 Cor. imply any change in those views, on the ground that the interval between the writing of the letters (probably about six months) was not long enough to permit such a change to take place. This psychological argument does not seem to us to have much force in the case of a personality so vivid, spontaneous and quick in his alternations of mood and outlook as was St. Paul. Changes that need years of slow development in certain lethargic temperaments take place in others by leaps of sudden intuition. Some men are pedestrian in their thinking; the imagination of others has wings; their processes of thought are sudden and rapid; and this seems pre-eminently true of St. Paul. It may be stated that

Here the vacant place taken by the conception of Antichrist and the Great Apostasy as preceding the Parousia is taken up by a new and ever-deepening sense of the universal spread of the Kingdom of Christ on earth, when all the world would be converted to the Gospel (Rom. xi. 25-32), which was immediately to precede the coming Advent. This was still conceived of as near at hand (2 Cor. i. 14). At this Parousia *God* was to judge all (Rom. xiv. 10), though elsewhere *Christ* is represented as being the judge (2 Cor. v. 10). This judgment is according to character as vitalised by faith (Rom. ii. 6, xiv. 12; *cf.* Gal. vi. 7, 8; Col. iii. 25). The spiritual body is to be given at death, but the Apostle is inclined to hope for himself and others that they might rather pass by "transformation" into the spiritual state without the crisis of death (is not this what he means by saying "not that we would be unclothed"—*i.e.*, by the dropping of the body at death —but rather "clothed upon" by the transmuting of this body suddenly into its spiritual equivalent?—see 2 Cor. v. 2-4). Resurrection is spoken of as though it took place at death, which puts us in possession of the spiritual body which "from one standpoint is the result of the action of the individual spirit, and from another a divine gift" (*cf.* 1 Cor. xv. 35-49; Gal. vi. 8; and

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the view adopted in the text is held by Reuss, Holtzmann, Teichmann, Pfleiderer, Schmiedel, Cone, Clemens, etc., as well as Charles. On the other side are Denney (*The Death of Christ*, p. 24), H. A. A. Kennedy (*St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things*, pp. 24 *et seq.*, 163, 262 *et seq.*, 271). For parallel movements of thought in Persian and Jewish literature see an interesting note in Kennedy's book (p. 263).

Rom. vi. 23). Thus in Rom. viii. 19 there is no longer any talk of a "resurrection" of the faithful at the Parousia, but of their "revelation" ("the earnest longing of creation waiteth for the *revelation* of the sons of God," which means the manifestation of the glory they already possessed; *cf.* Col. iii. 4). In harmony with this higher line of thought the faithful are represented as even now in possession of the resurrection life, being already "alive from the dead," or as "dead unto sin" and "alive unto God" (Rom. vi. 13; *cf.* Col. ii. 12, iii. 1; Eph. ii. 6).

4. When we come to the fourth phase of Pauline thought (three or four years later) the gradual sloughing off of the earlier Apocalyptic programme has reached its limit; indeed it is no longer possible to compare in detail the advance made with the earlier stages, as the perspective of thought has altogether changed.

The dominant idea in the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians is the supreme cosmic significance of Christ, who is at once the creative agent (Col. i. 17), the uniting principle (*ibid.*), and the final end of creation (Col. i. 16)—the starting-point and goal of the universe, who sums up all things in Himself as its unity.[1] The phraseology of Apocalyptic has now almost entirely disappeared, together with its panoramic programme and thaumaturgic changes of vision. The last traces of Judaistic Eschatology have melted away and disappeared from Paul's view; the Christian thinker has absorbed the Rabbinical expert; the expulsive power of the new Gospel has banished the fanciful

[1] Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

extravagancies of the old Apocalyptic. The change is so great that many great scholars have gravely doubted the Pauline authorship of these later epistles, but there seems no valid reason for doing this. For beneath these surface ideas the fundamental spiritual outlook of the Apostle is the same throughout. The difference lies in the fact that it took many years for the essential truths of the Christian Gospel to percolate through all the avenues of the Apostle's mind; and only at the last do we see the triumph of the new faith over the alien forms into which at the outset it had to fit itself. Others would suggest that in his later years Paul, forsaking Rabbinism, came more and more under the dominance of the Alexandrian Philosophy, and naturally changed his phraseology to suit his view-point. Be this as it may, it is clear enough that the creative principle in his mind was an ever-deepening conviction of the all-penetrating significance for him of the Living Christ who had been personally incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, now exalted to the throne of the Highest, and destined ultimately to appear as the Judge of all. Even the distinction between God and Christ, which appears in the Apostle's earlier doctrine of subordination of the Son to the Father (1 Cor. xv. 24-28) has passed out of view; Christ is in the end to be "all in all" (*cf.* Eph. i. 23), as God was in the earlier passage.[1]

[1] The one fixed and unalterable element in St. Paul's eschatology is his vivid realisation of the Parousia, which is implicit even in the later epistles (*cf.* Phil. i. 6, 10, 23 with ii. 16, 17), and while he no longer expected to be alive when it occurred, he does imply his belief that some of his readers would live to see it (i. 6). It is characteristic of his religious attitude towards his Lord that this belief should survive in the general

This transfiguration of the Apostle's thought is clearly seen in his final attitude regarding the extension of Christ's redemption to the realm of spiritual beings. I cannot here do better than quote Professor Charles' summary of Paul's ultimate views of future destiny. "Since all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, were created by Christ (Col. i. 16), and, according to the same passage, were to find their consummation in Him, they must therefore come within the sphere of His mediatorial activity; they must ultimately be summed up in Him as their Head (*ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ*, Eph. i. 10). Hence, since in the world of spiritual beings some have sinned and apostatised, they too must share in the Atonement of the Cross of Christ, and so obtain reconciliation (Col. i. 19, 20). How successful this ministry of reconciliation will be in the spiritual world, the Apostle does not inform us, nor yet whether it will embrace the whole order of spiritual existences—*i.e.*, the angels of Satan. Since, however, all things are to be summed up in Christ, there can be no room finally in the Universe for a wicked being, whether human or angelic. Thus the Pauline eschatology points obviously in its ultimate issues either to the final redemption of

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transformation of his ideas. The permanent value for faith of such a doctrine is a belief that the ultimate future belongs to Christ. But for this confident expectation, would not the nerve-centre of our own faith be sooner or later paralysed? There is no Parousia in the "eschatological" speculations of such a writer as Mr. H. G. Wells, hence the dismal and vacillating outlook on the future which characterises his writings.

all created beings, or—and this seems the true alternative—to the destruction of the finally impenitent. But this destruction would not be of the nature of an external punishment, but subjective and self-executed."[1]

We thus find St. Paul's views of the Last Things during the period of his literary activity (covering some ten years of his life) passing through a process of continual change. In the first phase his Apocalyptic programme is formal and rigid, as though he had taken it over bodily from other sources, without passing it through the fire of his own thought and experience; in the second and third, it is in a process of rapid disintegration and transformation, partly through the activity of his own thinking, partly through a deepening experience of the more spiritual aspects of the essential Gospel; in the last, this process has been practically completed and he bases his position no longer on a crude Apocalyptic foundation but on a profound realisation of the cosmic significance of the Person and power of the risen and regnant Christ, with whom he was in constant communion, and by whose spirit he had been led into the larger and deeper truth of the Gospel.

## IV

In the Johannine writings, which are much later than those of St. Paul, we have in one direction an advance on the Pauline doctrine, but in another a retrogression, owing, probably, to the fact that the writer was handling

[1] Charles, *op. cit.*, pp. 404, 405. Is this last statement necessarily true of St. Paul's view?

some synoptic traditions which had come down to him through an independent source.

Thus (illustrating the latter point) we find the reappearance of Antichrist (in the plural) who were to herald the approach of the Parousia (1 John ii. 18). This, in a word, was the spirit of unbelief (*ibid.* iv. 3). In the Johannine Gospel the Parousia has two meanings, one present and spiritual or subjective (xiv. 18, 19, xii. 26, 27, xiv. 21, 23; the second future or historical (xiv. 2, 3, xxi. 22; *cf.* 1 John ii. 28). What of Resurrection and Judgment? These, too, according to our present text, are twofold. Consistently the Resurrection should disappear, as an outward event, except in the sense of the consummation of all things, Jesus Himself being the principle and power of the resurrection or new life. There are, however, certain passages (John v. 28, 29) where a future resurrection is spoken of. Winstanley and Charles (and many other exegetes) treat these as later interpolations in the original text, with which they are out of harmony. There is at least not only a present judgment going on (John iii. 18, 19), but a day when in the final consummation of all things the issues of life and death are revealed (1 John ii. 28), and a man's relation to God is determined by his attitude to God's Son, and when the believer will enter on eternal blessedness or life, which is the full reward of the faithful (2 John 8). The fate of the finally impenitent is left in obscurity, but it is implied that in the issue there must be an end of those who have sold themselves irrevocably to its sway—if such there be.

When we pass on to the examination of the remain-

ing New Testament writings, we find a strong Apocalyptic strain in all, though they have no common or fixed Apocalyptic programme. We need not here discuss the Book of Revelation—which is a complicated web of Jewish and Christian eschatological pictures very difficult if not impossible to reduce to harmony—but will merely remark that it contains some of the finest and most comforting of all forecasts of the future life for believers, with a dark and terrifying background of retributory woe for the impenitent. It was partly written and partly compiled in times of fierce persecution and suffering, by a man of powerful and resplendent imagination, who felt bitterly the anguish and terror of the time, and whose state of mind is reflected in the lurid pictures of Divine vengeance that frequently occur. The chaos of imagery with which the book abounds has been the happy hunting-ground of millennial theorists in all ages—a process still unspent, but with which we need not trouble ourselves here, for "that way madness lies."[1] The chief spiritual value of the work lies in its glorification of martyrdom, and its beautiful pictures of heavenly blessedness, for those who are "faithful unto death." The "crown of life," the "hidden manna" and the "white stone"; the rich scene in which the Lamb receives the homage of the four-and-twenty elders and of the multitude whom no man can

[1] "The Apocalypse is obscure because it was meant to be obscure. The writers put into cryptograms things which it was not safe for Christians to discuss openly. No doubt it was generally intelligible to those to whom it was addressed, but the key has been lost" (W. S. D. McConnell, *The Evolution of Immortality*, p. 125).

number, the exquisite sketches of the New Jerusalem "descending out of heaven from God," with her streets of gold and walls of jasper, and of the New Heavens and the New Earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness" —have been taken to the heart of the universal Church, and stand figuratively for all that is beautiful and solacing in our hopes of the Hereafter. They are but splendid dreams, but faith accepts them as an attempt to put into the vividest language of earth some of those supernal realities "which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, but which God hath prepared (in the Hereafter) for those that love Him."

There is one aspect of the Petrine eschatology which must not be left out of this brief treatment of the New Testament literature. It is that embodied in the two passages referring (1) to Christ preaching to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19), and (2) the "preaching of the Gospel to the dead" (*ibid.* iv. 6). The interpretations of these passages have been bewildering in their inconsistency, suggesting that most commentators have been profoundly influenced by their own *a priori* conception of future destiny in their handling of the Apostle's words. Into these we will not enter, as they are not necessary for our purpose. Their significance for us lies in the fact that one of the New Testament writers who had spent his novitiate as one of the Lord's personal disciples had the boldness to suggest his belief that on the advent of the last judgment the Gospel will have been preached to both the "quick and the dead, so that all souls will have had the Great Alternative placed before them ere their doom is sealed." This, as Charles

well puts it, is the last achievement of the "all but final state in the moralisation of Hades." Whatever authority we may be inclined to give to these passages they at least prove how thoroughly at least one New Testament writer held to the hope that even beyond the grave there was a possibility of ethical change, and that in any case those who had no chance of having it presented to them here would not be left outside the range and appeal of the everlasting mercy.

## V

Let us gather up the results of this brief survey of the Eschatology of the Epistles.

1. As is the case with the Gospel teaching about the Last Things, they bear consistent testimony to the fact that *for all the Apostolic writers the future life is the moral and spiritual issue of this life.* Everywhere that life is viewed in its relation to conduct and character on earth. Everywhere, as in the Synoptics, it is made use of as a practical motive to moral endeavour, an urgent incentive to spiritual aspiration. This is its supreme interest; this is its practical value. All other motives to holiness pale in the light of this tremendous consideration—that whatever passes, character abides, and that our fate Yonder is governed by our actions and behaviour Here. These brief years of our earthly experience, so changeful in lot, so evanescent in opportunity, so speedily to end, contain eternal issues; our souls move to a solemn destiny of weal or woe, which does not unfold its full meaning till the gateway of death closes

the list of our earthly choices. This invests the smallest happenings of this life with profound significance, and promotes a habit of constant solicitude and watchfulness, lest at last we be found wanting. From this point of view the dominant New Testament appeal finds its expression in the weighty words of the Second Epistle of Peter, "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and *hastening* the coming of the day of God? Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Pet. iii. 11, 12, 14). Clearly then any view of the life Beyond which tends to lessen the spiritual significance of the life that now is, and encourages moral slackness or indifference, is out of keeping with the teaching of the New Testament from first to last.

2. *The touchstone of character* in this, as in any other life, is *the soul's attitude to the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ.*

This is the standard to which all must conform; this the test that will be applied to all—what is our final attitude to the revelation of saving love in the crucified and risen Lord? To all these writers this standard and test are axiomatic. Nor is there anything arbitrary in this position. For all men must stand or fall by their attitude to the highest they know, and what higher is there or can there be than this? And if so, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3). To be joined to Christ, therefore, to open the heart wide to his inflowing grace and power, to bow in penitence to the forgiving love revealed in His Cross, to share in

the potency of the risen Life—this is at once the duty and privilege of all who would enter on the life eternal. On the other hand, to stand obstinately outside the Christ life which is thus brought within our reach—this is to lose all, and to take one's place "with those outside the gate," whose fate is destruction.

But what of those who have never had this chance here? This is a speculative question which, however intense its interest for us, does not appear to have been fully faced by these writers. In their vivid and practical letters, we must remember, they were dealing only with those to whom the Gospel had been preached; and they were only concerned with the problems affecting these people in their actual lives. It is only by inference from isolated passages here and there that one or two hints emerge of the way they would have dealt with such a question were it plainly put to them. Probably indeed they would have given various answers to such an inquiry, for they do not all represent the same point of view, nor had any of them (not even Paul or John) fully worked out all the implications of the Gospel they preached. Such suggestions, however, as the later writers give us would tend towards a more kindly view of this problem than most exegetes have hitherto attributed to them, and there is certainly no ground for the terrible position which seems to have been almost universally held until quite recent times, that all who died in ignorance of the Gospel were eternally lost. Paul's incidental reference (Rom. ii. 12) to those "who have sinned without law and who perish without law" combined with the more positive assurance attributed to Peter in Acts x. 35, that "in every nation he

that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him," suggests that in their view men everywhere are judged by their attitude to such opportunities as are granted to them, while the passages already referred to, dealing with the preaching of Christ to the dead, open a door of hope that these latter will have the chance in the Beyond which has been denied to them here. This is the only light from the New Testament Scriptures that can be thrown on this problem. For the rest we are left to deal with it in the light of the central principles of the Gospel as revealed to ourselves.

3. Passing from these ultimate questions of faith to the forms which it takes in the Epistles, we come to this very important reflection—that *the eschatological Hope in New Testament times took more than one form*, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to reduce these forms to any common type or standard. The spiritual content, however, is the same throughout—a passionate faith in the Parousia and the Resurrection life; but the programme of events preceding and accompanying that Parousia is never quite the same in the various writings. It is clear also that in the mind of the greatest New Testament writer—St. Paul—the eschatological forms of belief were constantly changing with his advancing experience of fellowship with Christ and of service under Him. This is all the more remarkable when we remember two facts. In the first place, the earliest form of Paul's eschatological belief was believed by him to have been derived more or less directly from Jesus Himself, and was therefore presumably invested with the authority of the Master. Yet we find that Paul freely altered his eschatological views more than once in

favour of a more elastic theory, and that finally the Apocalyptic element disappeared altogether out of his teaching, giving way to an almost universalist view of future destiny. Secondly, he did this without in the slightest degree losing his faith in the Risen Lord. On the contrary, while the Apocalyptic form of the teaching of Jesus faded more and more into the distance, Paul's whole horizon was filled more and more fully, as the disillusioning and enriching influence of experience passed over him, with a sense of the presence, power, glory and final victory of Jesus in the eternal world. It is as though from the Unseen his Master's spirit were continually at work in Him, expanding his vision, clarifying and spiritualising his conceptions, and leading him by insensible degrees from the bondage of the letter into the freedom and sovereignty of the spirit. This should be a lesson to those to-day who imagine that if we venture to suggest that Jesus during His life Himself to some extent shared in the Apocalyptic views of His contemporaries, His authority as the Revealer of the Father must go by the board for ever. For here was one who in the very first century did surrender the synoptic Apocalyptic which he believed came from Jesus without any sense of incongruity, who yet held loftier and ever loftier views of the Divine significance of His Person, and of the quality and range of His cosmic function. What Paul thus did, apparently without realising the extraordinary nature of the fact, we may well do without fear or hesitancy. The Apocalyptic imagery of Jesus is but the crystal vase into which the wine of His spiritual teaching was poured; and that teaching can be poured into any other vessel, taking a

new form each time without in any way changing its own pure and heavenly content. We are therefore justified in distinguishing between the Jesus of Apocalyptic, and the Jesus who revealed the Father, because He was Himself the Son who was in the bosom of the Father. The one belonged to Galilee and Judea, the other belongs to the universe, who through His spirit in our hearts will lead us into all the truth He had no time fully to unfold while on earth.

## VI

It remains for us to complete this sketch of the history of the doctrine of Immortality in Biblical times, into the heritage of which Christendom has entered, by drawing a few general conclusions that have been suggested in the course of our study.

1. Whether we are to trace the primitive belief in a future life to the influence of dreams in which the dead reappear, or to a deeper intuitive insight into reality, it is clear that such a belief was in full possession of the field before the distinctively Hebrew religion began its course. Faith in Jahweh did not create faith in the life to come; on the contrary, the two lines of belief rose from different sources and ran along different channels for many centuries. They were even in conflict, for the conception of the life to come was heathen and non-moral, while from its inception Jahwism implicitly contained the elements of a thoroughly moralised view of life here and hereafter.

2. The conquest by Jahwism of the hitherto heathen

conception of the future life among the Hebrews was accomplished by two factors: (1) The unfolding revelation of the nature and character of God from the stage at which He was little more than a tribal deity, to that when He is recognised to be the Creator and Sustainer of all things, though specially the God of His Chosen People, with whom He was joined in a holy Covenant of Love. (2) The bitter lessons of experience through which the nation passed during its long history which led to a perpetual spiritual correction and expansion of its faith.

3. In Jesus Christ this revelation of God as Holy and redeeming Love came to its full and perfect manifestation, first in His teaching and healing ministry, then in His sacrificial death, and finally in His triumph over death. This was the essence of the Christian Gospel. But it was still necessarily encased in terms of the Apocalyptic of His day, as was needful for our Lord's oral and popular method of teaching, the only way of reaching the minds of his contemporaries being through the working ideas of their own minds.

4. The peril of such a method was that the passing form of the truth revealed should be identified with its abiding substance. In the Epistles, however, there is a further process of development whereby the inner power and meaning of the Gospel is seen emerging from its Jewish integument and taking on new and more elastic forms more consonant with the rapidly evolving realisation of the inner meaning of the Gospel. Here the creative principle of the Christian faith—the Christological element—is seen triumphing over its early Apocalyptic forms, and faith in the crucified and risen

Lord takes its permanent place as the creative germ of religious thought and experience.

5. The central truth of the Incarnation and the Cross, however, was never, in New Testament times, nor for a long time afterwards, used as a key to many of the problems of faith concerning future destiny. The Apocalyptic writings dealt with the questions of the day in the light of the Gospel, and it is idle for us to look there for a definite answer to many questions which are of supreme interest for us, but which had not occurred to any in that early age, absorbed as it was in the pressing practical problems arising out of the position of the infant Church in the Roman Empire. These writings had to do with the founding, organising, and consolidation of the first Christian communities; with ethical applications of the Gospel in the light of the universal expectation of the Second Coming of the Lord, and with the destiny of believers in the life to come. The more closely we study these writings, the more profound is the impression borne in upon us of the astonishing thoroughness with which this is done. Each writer has his own point of view both theologically and ethically, but on fundamental matters all are in complete ethical and spiritual agreement. And it is astonishing how much light on human need and duty in all ages and under all conditions has shone in upon mankind from these sunlit pages. But the very completeness with which the work of applying the revelation of God in Christ to the conditions of the primitive Church was done, is a limitation as well as an advantage for us. In the course of the ages, the focus of religious thought has changed many times, new problems have

arisen, new questions have been asked, new solutions are required. The history of doctrine proves that in certain directions Christian thinkers have not felt in any way hampered by the Jewish framework of thought in the New Testament from re-expressing the essence of certain great truths in terms borrowed from their own philosophical and scientific vocabularies—as in the case of the nature of Christ, the mystery of the Atonement and of the New Life, the theory of the Church, and kindred topics. In other directions religious thought has never quite broken loose from its Jewish moorings, the truth being identified with the temporary form in which it was first expressed, and little progress has been registered. It is only during the past generation, for instance, that the Jewish cosmogony, or idea of creation, has broken down under the irresistible impact of the evolutionary theory (even to-day there is still a rearguard of theologians who think in terms of the Ptolemaic astronomy, which has been discredited for four centuries). One more step has to be taken in order to free ourselves from the incubus of outworn Theory. We must accept the historical method of dealing with the facts of revelation, and this not only as regards the documents of Scripture, but also the thought contained in them. By so doing we are able to distinguish between what was of merely temporary significance, and what has persisted, and must continue to persist through all time, and we can see how what is most essential has passed through stages of development and growth which are even yet incomplete. By giving ourselves devoutly and honestly to the explication of this process, we are not only helping in the further unfold-

ing of the rich contents of the eternal Gospel of the grace of God, but are privileged to become the channels of that process for our own day, and co-workers with Him in His ceaseless Self-manifestation and saving energy. In this rapid and imperfect study of the history of the doctrine of the Last Things in the Bible, it has been our purpose to contribute something to this end, and to establish ourselves at the "growing-point" of truth.

# PART III

# CONSTRUCTIVE

## CHAPTER I

### IMMORTALITY AND THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS LIFE

"The scale on which an immortal being is planned is not commensurable with any measure of mortality: and what to a mortal might well seem unmitigated evil may appear to the immortal only a discipline the better qualifying him for immortality. We might well imagine that were his mortal life to be his whole and sole existence, then it ought to be like a sweet pastoral melody; but an immortal life is so vast that the prelude to it may fitly reach the proportions of a mighty epic, or be distinguished by the tragic situations that befit an immense drama."—A. M. Fairbairn: *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 150.

# CHAPTER I

## IMMORTALITY AND THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS LIFE

"The whole purpose, the only *raison d'être* of the world, is the development of spiritual beings capable of indefinite life, and perfectibility."—ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

HAVING cast a rapid glance at the critical questions recently raised concerning the mystery of the future life, and another on the history of the doctrine of immortality in Biblical times, we now return to our own special problems in the light of what has been written. First, however, a few words in recapitulation.

In the first part we found reasons for affirming that the modern scientific movement, which for a time was profoundly sceptical of the traditional belief in a life after death, has failed to substantiate the causal dependence of the soul on its bodily organism. We also found in the constitution of human personality, and the inadequate scope permitted by the conditions of this life for the realisation of its possibilities, a presumptive argument in favour of its survival in a world of larger and finer spiritual opportunities. But we found neither in our release from the influence of materialistic assumptions, nor in a consideration of the essential constitution of the soul itself, any sufficient grounds for a confident doctrine of survival. This, as shown in Part II., can

only be based on certain religious postulates, found historically in the revelation of God's nature and saving purpose for the world as progressively mediated through Jewish prophecy and Apocalyptic, crowned by the final revelation given in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This revelation was, however, given in "earthen vessels"; encased, that is, in Apocalyptic forms which partly revealed and partly concealed the truth within them; and these forms must be sharply distinguished from their content in order that this may be realised in its fulness and purity.

The abiding elements in the Christian revelation are its purely spiritual affirmations concerning the Fatherhood of God, the demands of His Holy Love on the filial obedience of man, the certainty of righteous judgment in the life to come on sin and disobedience in this life, and the equal certainty of blessedness for those who enter into the higher life of forgiveness, fellowship, and service here. Here are simple but great affirmations, and they are the affirmations of Christian Religion. What goes beyond these can scarcely be "a faith."

Great and simple as they are, however, they suggest many urgent questions which cannot be suppressed however hard we may try to do so. Nor is there any valid reason why they should be suppressed, providing only we handle them with becoming modesty and reverence. This war has raised some of these questions afresh, and they press to-day with poignant insistence on millions of tired and troubled hearts. What, for instance, are the limits of moral probation for the human soul? Are the solemn issues of this life eternally

settled at the moment of death, or do the ministries of Divine mercy pursue the soul on its long journey into the Unknown? Is it possible to reverse the decisions of this life in the life to come? Further, while it is affirmed, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that judgment," are we to understand that the verdict passed on us on that dread Day involves an endless destiny of weal or woe? Is there any hope for those who die "in sin"? And for those who die prematurely before they have faced the ultimate issues of Eternal life or death? Again, is the future life a state in which relations of friendship and love found here will be continued? Will those who have lived together here know each other in the Beyond? Will there be a reunion for sundered hearts, and a perfecting of moral and spiritual relations begun here? And, finally, are we justified in believing that God's plan of salvation will issue in the complete conquest of Evil, and the establishment of a universal Kingdom of Good? If so, will it be by the final extinction of souls persistently evil, or by their final restoration? In other words, is such a kingdom of good compatible with the continued existence of lost souls, however self-chosen their destiny, to endless ages?

These are not idle or trivial questions. They rise out of the depths of our moral being, and they demand such answers as the affirmations of faith in God as revealed in the Gospel permit us to give. If we view them steadily "in the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" we ought not to find ourselves in complete uncertainty on any one of them.

## I

We begin our constructive argument by reaffirming a fundamental postulate of the Christian faith (already referred to when summarising the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles[1])—*the profound and inescapable moral significance of this life.* We hold that any theory of the future state which obscures or minimises this truth is *essentially unchristian.*

It would be easy to show that this is not only a distinctively Christian doctrine, but one whose roots run far back into the Old Testament revelation. Man is there represented as a moral being, created in the image of the Holy God who made him and sent him forth into life that he may win his way into assured sovereignty over his environment without, and over his own lower nature within. This can be attained by him only by obedient fellowship with God, and in a just reciprocal fellowship with his fellow-man. The struggle for this ideal state is the struggle for the Kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of perfected relationships between all the moral beings of the Universe. In the earlier stages of revelation, when the horizon of faith was limited to this present life, it was held that this perfected state was attainable by humanity in the world that now is. Gradually it was seen that the stage, when thus limited, was too small for the drama, and faith rose boldly into the vision of another life where the ragged edges and inequalities of our earthly experience were gathered up and woven into a fuller and finer pattern.

[1] See pp. 142-144.

Finally the centre of thought and aspiration was shifted from this world into the next; our doings here were seen to involve eternal issues, and life was viewed as a pilgrimage or probation for the Life Beyond. This we affirm is the distinctively Christian position, and if we would remain Christian in our attitude, we must be faithful to this view-point in all our thinking.

Such a view of our life on earth—that it is a probationary segment of our total existence, whose ultimate meaning is found in the life to come—throws a clear light on some of the perplexities of experience, while at the same time it creates difficulties in other directions.

## II

In the first place, it solves many difficulties which are otherwise insurmountable.

1. We have already dwelt on the fact that the scope afforded by this life is insufficient for the working out of the issues of human character. The soul is made for a world of values which is incommensurate with the world of facts. Its ideals outsoar the limits of attainment in the short years of our earthly pilgrimage. No psychic satisfactions, however keen, can satisfy its spiritual hunger and thirst. The nobler our aims, the less do we feel that they fit in with our present opportunities for realising them. Personality at its best hopelessly outsoars the cramped limits of our earthly environment. If this life be all, then the more thoroughly we reach our moral and spiritual stature as men and women, the more irrational and unsatisfying does it prove to be. In that case, the writer of Ecclesiastes is

justified in his cynical conclusion regarding the futility of all high moral endeavour.

The Christian doctrine of the future life on the other hand meets this difficulty with an adequate solution. It endorses the outreach of the soul beyond the limits of time and space. It puts the seal of divine approval on the most daring moral enterprise. It provides adequate scope for the attainment of every ideal we can formulate. It sets its sanction on the man who gives his life as a willing sacrifice for the good of others, and for principles that cannot find their justification on any earthly basis. Life's highest ends become sacramental for those who can look forward to Eternity for their full attainment.

2. The hope of immortality also *dignifies the lesser temporary ends of life on earth.* They fall into place in the vast scheme of the future as steps to the goal, as stages in the process. The duties of a day lose their triviality when viewed as details in a large and noble destiny which depends for its completeness on the fidelity of its parts, and on their due subordination to the idea of the whole. Everything is worth doing well that helps, in however small a degree, to the perfecting of a world of souls who are destined to live for ever. Similarly, the smallest outgoings of influence take on a solemn significance when we remember that we are thereby helping to make or mar other souls whose eternal destiny may be affected by our doings. "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." Wise or foolish words, kind or vicious deeds, the perpetual moral pressure and play of one personality on another, are shaping the issues of life and death for all

involved. The passing ethical relationships of men are lifted to a higher plane of significance in exact proportion to the place that eternity enters into our thoughts concerning them. These relationships may pass from one phase to another, but their issues abide for ever.

3. *The Christian doctrine of sin finds its justification in the eternal issues of life.* All voluntary action which tends to the dominance of sense—the passing element in our conscious life—over soul—which is the element that abides to eternity—is seen to be irrational and evil, and comes under the final condemnation of the enlightened conscience. We carry with us the effects of our conduct into the Unseen. Thus, all that lowers our spiritual vitality, all that lessens the sense of God's presence and power, all that gives false glamour to what is material, mundane, self-centred, evanescent, is branded as inimical to our highest good. Nothing is right which tends to imprison the soul in the temporal order; nothing is wrong which leaves it free to set its affections on things Divine and Eternal. This is the Christian test to which every moral action must conform or be rejected. It finds its justification in the fact that human personality is the most sacred of all earthly realities, and that its well-being and perfection are the supreme interests of time and eternity. If this is so, then the Divine wrath against sin is seen to be the expression of His deepest nature, and the gracious gift of His Son for man's redemption becomes the central and creative fact of history.

4. *The "otherworldliness" of the Christian conception of life is also justified in the light of immortality.* Not the otherworldliness which despises this world, and

depreciates the value of the passing sources of enjoyment and happiness, but that nobler kind which keeps these in due subordination to eternal ends.

We may here return to a matter touched on earlier in summarising the teaching of our Lord on the Parousia.[1] We there pointed out the distinction that has been drawn between the Apocalyptic (or disruptive) and the Eschatological (or gradual) consummation of the Kingdom, and to the theory that the true historical fulfilment of the former was the inauguration of the life of spiritual personal fellowship with Christ which took place at Pentecost, and which has been fulfilled ever since in the mystical life of believers; while the latter is to receive its fulfilment in the Heavenly State. Whatever we may think of the exegetical question involved, this distinction is profoundly true to Christian experience. The heavenly kingdom within the soul is unquestionably brought about by a disruptive change of centre from the natural or "sarkic" (σαρκικός) life, to the spiritual or "pneumatic" (πνευματικός). This involves a radical change in our outlook on life as a system of ends. The centre of interest is moved from the earthly order to the heavenly; the personal life is controlled not by selfish or individual motives, but by those that flow from the Christ-life within, and becomes in virtue of that fact a "life hidden with Christ in God."[2] This foundation of human conduct in the

[1] See pp. 176, 177.

[2] "This is the real significance of that principle of disruptiveness which Mr. Garrod (in his *Religion of All Good Men*) has so aptly pointed out in the Gospel teaching. That is the meaning of that immediate Apocalyptic coming of the Son of Man. It is a mystical experience that takes place in the Christian

supernatural order is the explanation of that other-worldly spirit which is the true mark of the Christian soul. Its "conversation" is in heaven; its hopes, aspirations, incentives come from the Unseen and the Eternal; it is the power of an endless life within the experience of the natural life, which it has the secret of transmuting into spiritual equivalents, "using" the world while not abusing it, and drawing from the happenings of the day rich material for the upbuilding of the "life eternal," which is its true sphere and destiny.

The condition of fulfilling this destiny is entrance into fellowship with God, whose gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. On those to whom this opportunity is revealed in this life there thus rests a responsibility so tremendous that every other pales beside it into utter insignificance. We are set here,

> "Amid this dance
> Of plastic circumstance,"

that we may rise out of the natural life into the spiritual, so that we may become sons of the Resurrection, if only we are "found worthy." Those who fail to do so miss their one earthly chance of attaining the end for which they were born. Apart therefore from the question whether another chance will be given us hereafter, the moral significance of this life is profound and incalculable. Whatever may happen hereafter, this great

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soul. One may even trace within the pages of the New Testament the stages by which the primitive Church passed from the Apocalyptic framework to the kernel of truth which lay beneath it. When she discovered this she found it to be identical with her innermost experience" (L. S. Thornton, *Conduct and the Supernatural*, p. 172).

opportunity will have been lost, and to lose it is to lose it for ever, for here we live but once, and when our earthly probation is over, it cannot come again. It is this fact which explains the urgency of the Gospel appeal in the New Testament from its first page to its last. Everywhere we hear the voice of appeal, warning, judgment, finality. The talent is entrusted to us—let us use it well; the seed is sown—let the soil welcome it and give it room and nourishment that it may grow; the invitation is sent forth—let those who receive it refuse it at their peril; the pearl of great price, the boundless treasure, are discovered—let him who finds sell all that he hath, that he may possess them; the door is opened—let all enter, ere it be finally closed. These solemn notes in the Master's teaching find their echo in the Apostolic message; and the refrain we find everywhere is summed up in these solemn words, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" How true this appeal and warning are is testified to by every awakened conscience. Our life here is a series of irrecoverable chances, of irreversible choices, none of which recur, all of which have a clear bearing on our destiny. Even were there no after-life into which we carry with us the residual results of our experience here in enriched or impoverished personalities, there would be food for thought in these considerations; but in the light of life's solemn issues "beyond the veil" they take on a significance which is immeasurable, and invest the passing moments of time with meanings pregnant for eternity. All this is true whatever view we hold of the possibilities of renewed probation after death.

## III

This general presentation of the immense moral significance of this life finds its *endorsement in the Christian doctrine of judgment* which bulks so largely in the pages of the Bible. In a dim and tentative way it finds a place in the earlier stages of revelation; as the light grows, it takes ever more definite shape and colour; in the New Testament it occupies a place in the forefront of its teaching and appeal. The neglect into which this doctrine of the Christian Faith has fallen is symptomatic of a degenerate element in recent religious thought, and is to be deprecated. What finds so vivid and central a place in the teaching of Jesus and Paul cannot be surrendered without losing touch with an essential truth. It is necessitated by the character of God and by the nature of man.

1. It is *demanded by the character of God* as holy and just. It appears first in the writings of Amos and Hosea as one side or aspect of such a God as they reveal—His lovingkindness and severity. Being what He is, He is bound to vindicate the righteous and to manifest His wrath against the ungodly. Thus we find in the prophetic literature that there is a "Day of Jahweh," first as a vindication of Israel against their enemies, then of Himself against Israel (Amos and Hosea); then as a "world judgment" (Zephaniah, as a corollary to the monotheistic faith of that prophet). This idea reappears in an ever-clearer form in Apocalyptic literature—*i.e.*, either as a judgment of the living and certain classes of the dead, or of all rational beings

on the advent of the Kingdom, or of all rational beings at the close of the Kingdom.[1] By the time of our Lord this idea had taken complete possession of the field of thought; so much so that it became an axiom of the popular religion. In the teaching of Jesus the idea is winnowed of all secondary aspects, and becomes a spiritual assize in which a final pronouncement will be made on the issues of character in the light of God's righteousness and love. It implies that in the final consummation of the Universe all rational beings receive their due to the full.[2] It is needless to refer to the numberless passages in the New Testament where the urgency of this idea is pressed home on the hearts of men. In season and out of season Jesus recurs to this thought; it is impossible for any reader of his words to ignore "how large a proportion the language of rebuke and warning bears to the language of consolation and promise; the one is as grave, as anxious, as alarming as the other is gracious beyond hope."[3] "All this," another thoughtful writer has observed, "finds an echo in the conscience of those who have any sense of God as a Power not ourselves, making for righteousness. No man can feel that God is, and is the moral law alive, and not feel that in due time He must express His whole meaning regarding the ways and conduct of men."[4]

2. It is *demanded also by the nature of man.* There is, it is true, a judgment-seat in every man's heart, where

[1] See references in Charles, *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 422.

[2] Charles, *loc. cit.*, p. 399.

[3] Dean Church, *Human Life and its Conditions.*

[4] H. R. Mackintosh, *Immortality and the Future*, pp. 182, 183.

a verdict is pronounced on every moral act, by the still small voice which is at once his accuser and judge. Many Christian writers hold that there is no other judgment than is pronounced by this voice of conscience, which so often "doth make cowards of us all." But this is to surrender the distinctive Christian position. For conscience, in spite of its august authority, is too uncertain an exponent of the moral law to fulfil the function of a final judgment on human affairs. In those who need its verdict most, it is often seared by neglect and silenced by disobedience; in others, it is a mere reflection of the standards of conduct that happen to express themselves in the social environment; in the best men, it is often morbidly sensitive, and liable to temperamental aberrations and exaggerations. St. Paul keenly felt the inadequacy of conscience whether in its social or individual aspects as an ultimate arbiter of conduct, and found relief in the thought of an ideal objective standard perfectly kind and severely just, to which he felt bound, and which some day would be set forth in the "revelation of Jesus Christ." "But with me," he says, "it is a very small thing that I shall be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; *yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord*" (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4). To such a man it was a relief as well as an incentive to remember that it was impossible to escape from the searching verdict to be pronounced at last on human life in the High Court of Jesus Christ. The clear certainty, the delicate justice, the finality of that verdict were ever before him; in a world filled with moral confusion and

make-believe, he found comfort in the conviction that in the end all would be made clear, and perfect justice be done to all.

It is time we recovered our faith in this principle of final judgment on the achievements and failures in this life. We can surrender without detriment the Apocalyptic and imaginative form which it takes in the language of the New Testament; but we cannot without immense moral loss ignore the reality it embodies. Nor must we forget the fact that good men as well as bad will have to pass that final scrutiny. When Paul wrote, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," he was thinking not of unbelievers but of those who, like himself, had entered on the blessings of the kingdom. The thought recurs again and again in his Epistles. To the Romans he writes, "So then *each one of us* shall give account of himself to God" (xiv. 12); to the Corinthians, "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful"—*i.e.*, in the day of reckoning (1 Cor. iv. 1, 2). The same thought occurs in Hebrews xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch for your souls, as they that shall give account" (*cf.* 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11). Thus is the true panacea for that Antinomian spirit which is every ready to break forth in the Church in view of the free forgiveness and justifying love revealed in the Gospel, which tempt the shallow-hearted to think it matters not how they live when once they are enclosed within the fold of Christ. *There is judgment for all:* none shall escape. Our life on earth, both in its out-

ward doings and its inner temper and nature, abides the scrutiny of the all-loving, who is also the all-holy. Such a thought is a perpetual corrective against slackness, formality, sloth, and carelessness of life, and a daily stimulus to self-examination and improvement.

Thus does the sure hope of immortality in its various bearings on conduct enhance the moral significance of this life. It safeguards all ethical values; it furnishes a permanent standard against which we must measure all the passing fashions of thought; it ensures that no sin, however hidden or secret, shall escape its rightful condemnation; it nourishes a spirit of solicitude and responsibility in little things as well as great. Nor is the doctrine of judgment, which is inseparable from the Christian outlook, a hard or forbidding thing. On the other hand, to quote Professor Mackintosh's wise and tender words, "To be tried at last in Christ's presence, may be truly designated as the last means of grace for the redeemed. There will be pain in it doubtless beyond our imagining—the purifying and emancipating shame of those who bend under the condemnation of perfect love, in full assurance that for all their guilt they will not be cast out. But our sin will then be shown us, not to torture us, but in order that more and more we may understand the length and breadth and greatness of His mercy who knows what is in man."[1]

[1] *Immortality and the Future*, p. 124.

# CHAPTER II

## IMMORTALITY AND HUMAN PROBATION

"Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine make its round,
'Since life fleets, all is change; the
Past gone, seize to-day!'

* * * * *

"He fixed thee midst this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest,
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and fit thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

* * * * *

"So take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times are in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!"

BROWNING: *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

## CHAPTER II

### IMMORTALITY AND HUMAN PROBATION

"Life is probation, and the earth no goal,
But starting-point for Man."

BROWNING.

WE have seen that in the light of the Christian doctrine of Immortality, this life takes on the aspect of a moral probation. It may be equally well described as a discipline, an education, a quest after perfection, or even a period of gestation for the soul. But for our purpose we shall find the word probation sufficiently accurate and inclusive. For character is determined in the last analysis by the result of our preference for this or that alternative of conduct day by day. Some of these choices are trivial and seemingly evanescent, some are important and fateful, but they all leave their traces, and help to build up or impoverish our moral personality. But there is one great alternative which comes to all on whom the light of God's truth shines through the Gospel, which involves issues so far-reaching and vital, that we may rightly represent it as determining our whole future destiny. It is the alternative whether we will accept or reject the offer of redemption from sin, and the renewal of the deepest springs of our spiritual life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. By our response to this appeal we shall all stand or fall at last. In the end—such is the

natural inference—there will be but two classes of souls —those who accept or reject this offer. It is impossible to read the New Testament through with an open mind without this conclusion being forced on us.

The question thus comes home to us with urgency, What are the limits of moral and spiritual probation for the human soul? Is this brief spell of life the only arena on which the battle is to be fought for the soul's redemption, by the issue of which our place and destiny is to be irrevocably fixed? Momentous as the issue of our present experience must in any case be—*this being our only chance here*—are we empowered and forced by the Christian revelation to affirm that once death is passed and the period of our earthly probation is at an end, there is no further prospect of being able to reverse our attitude and enter on the life eternal? When Goethe sings,

> "Choose well, your choice is
> Brief and yet endless,"

and Matthew Arnold writes in a mood more uncompromising—

> "Foil'd by our fellow-men, depressed, outworn,
> We leave the brutal world to have its way,
> And, Patience! in another life, we say,
> The world shall be thrust down and we upborne.
> And will not then the immortal armies scorn
> The world's poor routed leavings? Or will they
> Who fail'd not under the heat of this life's day
> Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?
> No, No! the energy of life may be
> Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
> And he who flagged not in the heavenly strife
> From strength to strength advancing—only he
> Mounts, and that hardly to eternal life,"

are we to understand that their attitude represents the incontrovertible verdict—the last word—of the highest revelation of God's dealings with His children?

## I

There is an ambiguity in the way this question is often put, which must be cleared away at the outset. The human race in relation to the Gospel is divisible into two great sections—those who have had the opportunity of accepting the Christian redemption on the one side, and those on the other to whom this opportunity has not been presented at all in this life, or has been presented inadequately. Again, the former section is divisible into three classes—those who have fully accepted it, and have therefore "passed out of death into life"; those who (apparently at least) have finally rejected it, and live in self-centred alienation from, or open enmity against, God; and those who have as yet not faced the issue, nor fully determined their attitude towards it. It is clear that these various classes occupy a very different position in relation to our question, and that in dealing with it, this crucial fact must be fully borne in mind. For instance, if the offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ is the final touchstone of character and therefore of destiny, can we speak of those who have never heard of it as in the same category of judgment as those who have known it all their lives? Again, since a condition of vacillation and uncertainty is very different from one of conscious rejection or of hearty acceptance, we can scarcely deal with all these

types as though they stood on the same plane; for at any time, with possibly only a briefly extended period of probation, the intermediate class might pass into either of the others. We must therefore deal with each of these classes separately in the light of the essential principles of the Christian Faith. For lack of making this clear distinction, Christian thought on the problem of probation and destiny has from the beginning been lacking in logical clearness and in moral cogency.

## II

Let us first consider those who have had an adequate opportunity of realising the solemn alternative.

Of those who have been brought up in the full light of the Gospel, to whom it has been faithfully preached, and who have felt the full pressure of its appeal to the conscience, we may say that the great alternative has been adequately presented in this life. It would be difficult to conceive a better chance in this or any other state of existence than many of us have had of surrendering our whole being to the will and purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. There are millions of souls throughout the ages to whom the unmistakable call has come, and who have realised its fateful significance in some great moment of illumination. How in that moment they responded to the call, determines their attitude usually for the rest of their lives. They passed into the privilege of the Kingdom, or they turned away from it into the darkness and spiritual helplessness of a self-centred and sinful life. We may say of the

former, not indeed that they are already perfect, or that they can ever attain perfection in this life, but that with all their faults and failings, they are grasped in the deeps of their being by the saving forces of the Gospel, and have been quickened thereby into "newness of life." We may say of the latter that with all the excellencies they may still possess, they are fundamentally under the sway and dominance of their lower nature, and that the trend of their character is away from God, and from the "life eternal" which can be realised only in fellowship with Him, and in obedience to His holy will. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that these two classes do exist, and that so far as can be judged from observation they have taken their deliberate and final stand for or against the appeal of the higher life.

It would, however, be a crude misjudgment to classify all to whom the Gospel has been preached as belonging to one or other of these two classes. Before the great act of decision can take place in any man certain subjective conditions must be fulfilled. The soul must be awakened to a clear sense of the tremendous significance of the spiritual issues involved, and this awakening depends on many factors, which are by no means always under the control of the will. What truly religious man can look back on his own experience without feeling that there was a large element of contingency in the way his conversion took place? Suddenly, it may be after years of placid listening to the word of life during which his better nature was dormant, a chance word, an unforeseen calamity, a conversation with a friend, a great physical deliverance, the loss of someone

near and dear, a sentence in a book, a startling accident, took place, and lo! the issues of life and death were unveiled in all their solemn majesty, and we became different men for all time. In other cases, it was the result of a process as gradual as a dawn slowly expanding to the perfect day, and we knew that the decisive hour had come and gone only by an inner conviction that in some mysterious way a great crisis had been experienced, leaving behind it a "new creature" in a "new world." Some, like the man in our Lord's parable, found their treasure as by a Providential accident when engaged in other tasks; to others it came as to the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who at last lighted on the pearl of great price and felt that it was worth all that he had. To many, however, it would appear this experience of sudden or gradual illumination never comes in this life at all. They are neither in a "saved" nor in a "lost" spiritual state. They have never awakened to the mighty issues of their spiritual destiny; they are religiously asleep. It is impossible to describe them as having rejected the call of God to walk in newness of life, nor have they obeyed it. At any moment such souls may awake; long years may pass and nothing happen to them. Most of those who have passed through the crisis of conversion remember a period like this in their experience; and it is fairly clear that the vast majority of our fellow-men are in this stage of spiritual evolution. They are not "saved," but they are "salvable," as an army chaplain recently described the bulk of the soldiers at the front; they are not "lost," but the hour may come when they will slip into that awful path which "leadeth to destruction."

Down to quite recent times, Protestant thinkers classed these undecided souls in the same category as those who lived abandoned and sinful lives. In a "state of nature" all men were under the wrath and judgment of God, and there was but one way out of this condition—repentance and faith. There is enough truth in this position to call for profound solicitude on the part of all those whose business is the "cure of souls," for whether a man be unawakened or openly evil there is only one way into the Kingdom for sinful men. There is, however, a mischievous error in the above attitude inasmuch as it obscures the profound distinction between those who are given over consciously and wilfully to a godless life, and those who are not. This distinction is surely fundamental. And yet it has been taken for granted by half Christendom (for the Roman Church, with all her errors, has never been guilty of this), on the ground of a crude interpretation of certain passages in Scripture, that all who pass through life in a state of spiritual indecision or slumber are in the same case as those whose decision has been clearly given for a life of sin, and that no further opportunity will be given to them. This is to believe that the Searcher of hearts who is the righteous judge of all, and who determines their destiny, is less discriminating in His judgment of men than they are of each other. For no just judge in any earthly court would be guilty of such elementary injustice. How much less the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose will is that none should perish but that "all should come to a knowledge of the truth"!

III

Again, let us consider the relation of death to human probation.

What is death? Physiologically, it is the dissolution of the vital bond between the soul as the living principle, and the body which is its organism. Psychologically it is the end of our conscious life on earth. Morally it is the cessation of our present opportunities of ethical action and development—the end of our earthly probation. Now, whatever be our views of the origin of death—whether that it is the inevitable sequence and end of the physiological processes, as modern science appears to teach us; or that it is the *un*natural consequence of our lapsed moral condition, and in no way inevitable except as sin has made it so, as the Bible has been held to teach us two things are abundantly clear. First, it is the end of our chances of moral betterment in this life! and secondly, it comes to men in ways that are entirely out of relation, as far as the closest observation enables us to judge, to their moral condition. It is always uncertain in its incidence. We know not what a day may bring forth to any of us. Some men die in a green old age; others in early infancy; or they may die at any age between these two extremes. Some do not die till they have gone through all the normal experiences of human life; others are cut off in the midst of their days; others before they have well entered on their "choices and chances." Before the end it is given to many to come under fullest spiritual illumination; to others death comes when in a state of profound spiritual ignorance; to others before they have

awakened to the urgency of the call that has always been sounding in their ears. There is no correspondence between our spiritual condition and our chances of continued living, or our liability to sudden death. The two series of facts move along different but intersecting paths of causation. Unquestionably moral factors are intermingled with the physical; many die before their time, because they have ruined their constitution by riotous living; and length of days is often the reward of pure and virtuous living. But there is no evidence to prove that unconverted souls are ever providentially guarded from death in order that they may have a full chance of redemption before it is too late. While, therefore, we must hold that the issues of life and death are ever in the hands of God, it is quite impossible to relate them to the preparedness or otherwise of those who are called upon at any minute to pass the dread portal that separates this life from the next.

Unless, therefore, there is a secret factor at work which equalises the probationary chances of all men, it is no longer possible to hold together the two propositions that death ends probation for all men, and that God is just to all. The Calvinist solved this difficulty by inventing a doctrine of "Divine decrees," and affirming the sovereignty of God in an uncompromising form. Some men were elected to salvation and some to perdition, but why this was so was God's secret; nor had we any right to ask. He who made us, hath He not a right to do what He wills with His own? "Hath not the potter power over the clay to make of the same lump one vessel to honour and another to dishonour?" (Rom. ix. 21). On such premises, our moral sense is

paralysed; all rational judgment of God's relations to men is impossible; faith becomes a blind assent to an ethical contradiction that is insoluble. Browning's caustic poem *Caliban* has given the *coup de grâce* to this monstrous theory of human destiny.

Some recent writers of gentler temper find comfort in the thought that no one can tell what miracles of awakening and grace may not supervene on behalf of the undecided or even the obstinately impenitent at the moment and article of death, however sudden and unforeseen. We would not limit the heart's legitimate tendency to hold the hopefullest theory of death-bed repentance. It can, however, at best only mitigate our difficulty; it cannot remove it. For in the first place it is an argument "from ignorance"; we do not know what happens at death with anyone. Nor can it affect those cases in which death occurs quite instantaneously, or during sleep, or after long unconsciousness. And while there are doubtless many apparent instances of such "last moment" conversions, we are not in a position to test their genuineness, and can only hope against hope that if they had occurred during life they would have proved permanent. Finally, while such evidence as comes to us through the testimony of physicians and nurses in our hospitals who are constantly observing what takes place at death tells heavily against the theory that such conversions frequently occur, there is no evidence whatever that death involves any moral crisis in the vast majority of cases. The worst men usually die as calmly and quietly as the best: a long "stupor mortis" effectually veils what may be going on in the recesses of the soul in the case of ninety-nine out

of every hundred persons. While therefore we are bound to believe in the illimitable mercy of God to the vilest sinner on this side of the grave, any theory that the apparent inequalities of spiritual opportunity are set right for all at the moment of death rests on too frail and supposititious a basis to satisfy the reason or the moral judgment. Nay, such a theory, if made absolute, would endanger the very issues at stake. Tell men that, however godless their life, they are fairly sure to be able to shirk the retribution they so richly deserve by a kind of death-bed miracle, and you cut the nerve-fibre of the moral appeal to their will. The solemn urgency of the Gospel claim on their acceptance loses its edge and vanishes in a misty sentimentality. However well-meaning such a notion may be, it is calculated to ease a perplexed faith at the expense of a dangerous complaisancy, and encourage multitudes of vicious persons to sin freely "that grace may abound." The true Christian position seems to be this—that while death-bed repentances are just possible they are exceedingly rare, and that those who continue in sin on such a theory run an infinite risk of finding themselves deceived and undone at last. Equally true is it that those who try to ease the theory that death ends probation by a factitious and unreal hope that the stern medicine of death may accomplish what the normal ministries of life fail to accomplish are leaning on a frail reed. If we are to conclude that there is no further chance of redemption beyond the grave, and that Matthew Arnold's lines are true that—

> "The energy of life may be
> Kept on after the grave, but not begun,"

then let us frankly accept the issue, and plead with men to avoid the slightest delay in facing the issue and to surrender their will to the call of the Gospel to instant repentance lest it be for ever too late.

## IV

Some answer to the problem whether human probation is limited to this life becomes still more insistent when we consider the case of the vast majority of the human race who have never been brought under the light of the Gospel.

Our Protestant forefathers frankly held that the heathen were irretrievably lost for this reason. They were indeed forced to this position by the logic of their creed. No salvation out of Christ; no probation after death; therefore no salvation for those who died in ignorance of the Gospel which alone contained the knowledge of the Saviour—such was the conclusion to which they were bound to come. The only mitigation of penalty they could suggest was that those who had sinned without law should perish without law (Rom. ii. 12), and that "he that knew not his lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, should be beaten with few stripes" (Luke xii. 48). Some early writers found a further mitigation of sentence in the passages which speak of Christ as "preaching to the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. iii. 19), or of the Gospel "being preached to the dead" (*ibid.* iv. 6); but the incidental and obscure nature of these passages did little to ease the situation. For many centuries it was in effect taken for granted that though the heathen could not be held responsible

for their ignorance of the Gospel, they were yet doomed righteously to everlasting perdition in spite of that ignorance; and that though their lot in hell might be modified on this ground, there was no possibility in the after-life of any renewed chance of probation. This seems to have been the position taken up by Dante. The great Protestant missionary societies initiated under the inspiration of the Evangelical Revival were all based on this theory, and their ostensible appeals for help took much of their urgency from it. The wonder is that such a position did not force the Church at a much earlier period to strain its utmost energies in trying to evangelise a world thus faced by such a terrible doom.

But it is not the heathen only who live and die in ignorance of the Gospel. No one who reads the past records of religion, or fairly envisages the facts of the present, can possibly hold that an effective knowledge of it is possessed by more than a small minority of those bred and born in the most favoured Christian land. It is easy to point out the multitude of churches and chapels in our own and other countries and to our numerous Sunday-schools and other educational agencies, and to the fact that the Bible is the most widely circulated book in the world. All this is true, but it is not the whole truth. In a general and abstract way it may be affirmed that he who is really anxious to know the way of life has full means of finding it. The question, however, as to the effectiveness of these agencies to reach their object is not to be disregarded. Not till the great alternative has been *brought home* to the individual conscience can we say that the critical point in any man's life has been reached. True there

are innumerable cases of men and women who have been brought up under the full light of the truth, who could scarcely have it brought home to their moral sense in any conceivable way more effectively than here. But how few are these cases in comparison with those of whom this cannot be said! A distinguished theologian and preacher who had spent several months in close contact with the men at the Front recently told the writer that the proportion of British soldiers who were in practical ignorance of Christianity, and who had never been brought into anything like effective contact with the truth, was appallingly great. At a favourable estimate seventy per cent. of these men were entirely out of touch with the Church of Christ. It is easy to say that this is entirely their own fault; but such a statement does not carry us far. It is mainly a question of environment. Multitudes of our fellow-citizens are being brought up in practical heathen surroundings, the mental and moral limitations of their upbringing having barred their way to a real knowledge of the essential truths of religion as truly as though they had been born in the wilds of Africa. Can we say of the denizens of our city slums that they have had an adequate knowledge of the Christian Gospel? The worst that could be said of many of them is that they are heedless and careless of what they may have casually heard of it, not that they are incurably vicious and depraved. Under other circumstances many of them would no doubt have responded to a faithful appeal. And if so, dare we suggest that their failure to do so amid their present surroundings is a sufficient reason for condemning them to eternal perdition?

If, then, the only chance of redemption that men have is in this life, with all its inequalities and its contingencies, it is hard, if not impossible, to retain a hearty belief in the justice and lovingkindness of God. And further, on this hypothesis, we are forced to the conclusion that the number of the "saved" will be utterly insignificant as compared with that of the "lost." This, indeed, was the conclusion to which earlier thinkers were forced to come—alas! with little sense of compunction apparently, since some of them thought that it would be a part of the felicity of the redeemed to behold the torture of the damned. Chrysostom doubted if one out of a hundred of the 100,000 souls in Antioch in his day would be among the "saved." Even as late as A.D. 1680 a quarto volume published in London called *Moral Reflections upon the Number of the Elect*, by D. Moulin, affirmed that not one in a million, from Adam down to those times, would be saved. "A flaming execration blasted the whole heathen world; a metaphysical quibble doomed ninety-nine out of every hundred in Christian lands. Collect the whole relevant literature of the Christian ages, from Tertullian to Jonathan Edwards (and much later), strike the average pitch of its doctrinal temper, and you get the result: that in the field of human souls Satan is the harvester, God is the gleaner; hell receives the vintage in its winepress of damnation, heaven only receives a few straggling clusters for salvation."[1] And

[1] See Alger, *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (pp. 440, 441). "In the continent of human life Christianity occupies but an insignificant space. It covers but a score out of the thousands of centuries of human progression. Those

this, we cannot but believe, is the only rational conclusion to which any unbiassed mind must come to on the theory that probation is limited to this life, and that there is no chance for anyone to come to a knowledge of the truth in the world to come.

## V

It is, however, more than doubtful if any large number of thinkers to-day really believe the traditional tenet that death ends all probation for mankind. Theoretically doubtless many do so. But the time has gone by for much heed to be given to beliefs that are merely theoretical. The real test of any creed is whether it is effective in practice—whether it really urges us to appropriate action.

By way of testing how far this belief is genuinely held by average Christian people, let us consider a few significant facts of the present situation.

When we entered on this colossal struggle in which 25,000,000 of the youth of Europe are engaged, all ready to surrender their lives for their cause, all ready

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who ever did or could have heard of our Master are but an infinitesimal fraction of the sum of that mighty host of human beings who have appeared upon and passed off this world's stage. A means of attaining to immortality therefore which would be valid after a given date A.U.C. and within a given geographical area, could only be a mockery. It would be like a zoology whose laws held good only within a *Thiergarten*, and would be inapplicable to the beasts of the field. . . . Even the gift of eternal life might scarcely be accepted at God's hands if it came tainted with favouritism" (McConnell, *Evolution of Immortality*, pp. 131-133).

to do their best to kill as many of their enemies as may be necessary in order to win victory for their side, we watched the gathering hosts of our voluntary army with open pride and exultation. From North and South, East and West, these bright and eager youths came flocking to the standard at their country's call, and presently their legions were swelled by contingents that poured into the fray from our vast dependencies. A little later, the rest of our youth were forced whether they would or no into the army. All were at once put through severe physical training for the purposes of war. Nothing was left undone to make them thorough and efficient soldiers. Presently came news of colossal losses at the Front. Every month the number of casualties has grown greater. Sorrow has swept like a salt wave over innumerable families; the rolls of honour in the porches of our churches contain an ever-increasing list of "heroes" who have made their last and greatest gift to their country—which is that a man should die for his friends. Their memory is deservedly held in honour, their names are whispered in tones of undying gratitude. During the whole of this time, however, there is no evidence whatever that there has been any great solicitude for their spiritual condition at the moment of death. More care and attention have been shown by the nation at large, and by most of the churches, to provide the soldiers with physical comforts and cigarettes than to ascertain whether these young souls are "ready" to die. No Church dignitary, no company of "simple believers" anywhere, has raised the question whether it is right to send young men to their doom, in however just a cause, without first ascertaining by

the most drastic tests whether they are spiritually "fit" to die. Pacifists have arisen in considerable numbers protesting against war as totally inconsistent with the Christian ethic, but we are not aware that any of them have protested against it on the ground that it is inhuman to hurry thousands of unprepared men into perdition. In all the debates in Parliament, in all the published sermons on the war, in all the discussions as to the justifiability of war as a means of deciding international quarrels, has a single voice been raised calling attention to the fact that a man's eternal destiny depends irrevocably on his spiritual condition at death, and that therefore it is a diabolical thing to allow men to give their lives for their country unless they are in a "saved" condition, and certain of eternal felicity when they die? And yet, if we really believe that probation ends with death, we are guilty of this heinous and unspeakable crime. We are accepting as the price of the future of our Empire this awful holocaust of sacrifice—that *for us* thousands of our young men are sent *perforce*, with our full sanction, not only into premature death (which forsooth is a sufficiently solemn thing to do), but into everlasting perdition—and this without protest, or shame, or apparent consciousness of its criminality on the part of anyone!

Nay, it is inconceivable that Christian people, in the face of this drastic test, any longer believe in this ancient doctrine, otherwise surely some indication would be somewhere given that they realise the unspeakable horror of the situation. Some may still hold theoretically that death "ends probation"; but the whole attitude of the Christian world gives the lie to such a

belief. Like all decaying doctrines, it has not been disproved; it has simply dropped out of our creed by its own unreasonableness and loss of vitality. None of us really believe it; if we did life would be no longer bearable for any lover of his kind; existence would be a nightmare of horror directly we realised the meaning of our creed—not because of the physical horrors of war, but because it involved damnation as well as death for legions of men who perished that we may retain our liberties, and our Empire its chance of future expansion. Would any humane and reasonable man be prepared to purchase this boon at such a price?

Nor can we, if the revelation of God in Christ is true, imagine that He, the Holy One and the Just, who knows what is in man both of actual evil and possible good, would accept it or suffer it to be. Whatever the many and repeated notes of warning in the words of Jesus may mean—words that sound like the solemn tones of a passing-bell—they cannot mean that every man's destiny is determined automatically by the incidence of death, irrespective of the innumerable moral differences between one man and another, and of the crucial facts that it is the few to whom the offer of salvation comes home with convincing power in this life, and fewer still who deliberately and finally reject it. What our Lord's words mean is that when we are faced with our realised moral responsibilities, and yet consciously shirk, neglect, or misuse them, then there is no going back on them to catch up the lost chance, but rather a sure going forward to judgment for our sin. Let us once realise that the severest words of Jesus apply not to the undecided, or the ignorant, or the

immature souls, but to those who say "we see," and whose sin therefore "remaineth," and their severity is seen in their just proportion and perfect justice. It is, in other words, those who consciously refuse to enter His Kingdom of grace and love, or who once within it, play with their accepted responsibilities of service and duty, who call forth His final condemnation. For Him the "lost" were always salvable, the ignorant always capable of being awakened and reclaimed. It is for these He gave His life; and His glorious sacrifice will, we venture to believe, avail not only in this but in all worlds for those who, hearing the appeal of His love, cast themselves in penitence and faith at His blessed feet. Jesus would never reject anyone who had not first rejected Him, nor can we conceive Him as continuing to reject anyone who turned to Him, whether here or yonder, however long or far he may have wandered, however bitter his enmity may have been, or however heinous his sin. If any man, therefore, be finally lost, it must be by his own obstinate refusal to the pleadings of the "everlasting mercy."

## VI

We thus come to our last question here, What are the conditions of an adequate probation? Can we put any limit to these conditions in the case of a moral being?

Probation means *trial under temptation.* It is the state of a free moral being face to face with ethical alternatives, either of which he is free to choose without let or hindrance. These alternatives must be "living options"—*i.e.*, they must have meaning, reality, and

relevance to the practical issues of life. These options change from time to time, and become "dead" options as soon as they cease to bear on the living interests of experience. The interests of a child are not the interests of a man; the interests of a saint are in vivid contrast with the interests of a criminal, but every moral personality has a set of interests at any given time which appeal to him as important. And every man has a conflicting set of interests between which he has to choose; and this fact constitutes his "probation." Life so far as it is ethical and spiritual is the experience of being called upon to go on choosing between these living options. When one set ceases to have any appeal, it falls into the background; but it is always succeeded by others on a different plane. So long as our ethical life lasts there will be this oscillation of the will between opposing options, good and bad, or good and better. As soon as such a process ended that would be the end of our ethical experience; we should cease to be moral beings in any true sense.

From this it follows that probation must continue so long as moral personality persists. All progress in moral life consists in rightly determining our attitude towards each passing or permanent set of options, and so of rising to higher options. And when we speak of the heavenly state as sinless, it cannot mean that ethical freedom and choice end, but only that the heavy entail of our past sin is broken, and that we shall be more and more free to choose the good and the holy in the ever finer and more delicate alternatives which constitute the material of our spiritual experience. A mechanical fixity of character would indeed be no real heaven for

a living and aspiring soul; infinite progress must be a holy choosing between infinite possibilities of holiness. Conversely, if there be any who are finally lost, it will be those whose exercise of wrong choices has made it harder and ever harder for the will to identify itself with the better alternative and so climb out of evil ways to heights of goodness. When the power to choose the better has disappeared and a soul is finally identified with the worse, there is an end to the moral life in its proper sense, a condition described in Scripture as "destruction," "perishing," the "second death." If, and when, any soul reaches this state of unspeakable and hopeless degradation, we may well ask, Is it not reasonable, if not inevitable, that the next and last issue of its misspent probation must be complete and final annihilation? To this problem let us next address ourselves in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

# CHAPTER III

## TWO THEORIES OF FUTURE DESTINY—
## I.: UNIVERSAL RESTORATION

"Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race;
Call on the lazy, leaden-stepping hours,
Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace,
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain,
And merely mortal dross:
So little is our loss,
So little is thy gain.
For when, as each thing bad thou hast entombed,
And last of all thy greedy self consumed,
Then long eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss;
And joy shall overtake us as a flood,
When everything that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
With Truth, and peace, and Love shall ever shine
About the supreme throne
Of Him to whose happy-making sight alone
When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb
Then, all this earthly grossness quit,
Attired with stars we shall for ever sit
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and Thee, O Time."

MILTON.

## CHAPTER III

### TWO THEORIES OF FUTURE DESTINY— I.: UNIVERSAL RESTORATION

"Truth for truth and good for good!
The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just.
Take the charm 'For ever' from them,
And they crumble into dust."

LOCKSLEY HALL: *Sixty Years After.*

BEFORE we do so, however, it will be necessary for us to consider an alternative theory of Future Destiny which has been held by some of the finest Christian thinkers of early times and more especially of our own day, which goes under the title of Universal Restoration. According to this theory we are called upon to postulate a continuance of our moral probation in the Life Beyond, during which the ministries of Divine Grace continue to act on the will of those who die in an unrepentant condition, with the assurance that in the end these will prove triumphant over all hindrances in the sinful soul, and issue in the final salvation of all. This is the dreamland, the Enchanted land of theology, "the cloudland looming with rose-tinted peaks in the far aeonian future" which has fascinated some of the choicest and most saintly minds from the third century onwards, and has probably more votaries to-day than ever before. It appeals to us on the highest side of our sympathies if not of our reason, and opens

out a prospect so fair and glorious of the triumph of the redemptive plan, and the victory of Divine Love, that we cannot afford to let it go unless compelled to do so by the strongest possible reasons.

The list of writers who have held this view of human destiny is formidable in numbers and weighty in authority. For its first tentative formulation we must go back to Clement of Alexandria (*c.* A.D. 190). It was put into more clear and logical form by Origen, and by Gregory of Nyssa (fourth century), who were followed by Didymus of Alexandria, Diodorus of Tarsus, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. It is significant, however, that all these writers belong to the Eastern Church, which was so long dominated by the Platonic philosophy, not one prominent divine of the Latin Church being found among its advocates (who were more under the sway of the dualistic Gnostic teaching). Not till the sixth century do we find any fresh exponent of the doctrine; but in the ninth, John Scotus Erigena, who was Pantheistic in his leanings, gave it a qualified advocacy. It fell into general disrepute in the Middle Ages, and during the Protestant Reformation, though we find some Restorationists, such as John Denk, in the sixteenth century. It was not till later that any large body of thinkers identified themselves with the theory, among whom we find Bishop Newton of Bristol, William Law, Jeremy Taylor, Tillotson, Barrow, Cudworth, and Whichcote; while in the nineteenth century such scholars as Schleiermacher and Olshausen, a large number of American writers, and among our own theologians, Dr. Samuel Cox, Professor J. B. Mayor, Mr. Andrew Jukes, Frederick Denison Maurice, Archdeacon

Farrar, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, and others, favour the theory, though they do not all identify themselves with it. Speaking broadly, we may say that those who hold it, do so under the dominance of a *theological* idea, finding in the sense of the loving sovereignty of God an assurance that He cannot in the end fail to gain His will over the forces of evil; while those who repel it, do so under the stress of an *anthropological* idea, finding in the nature of human freedom and the dire consequences of sin, a bar to any such assurance. And it may be said that those who advocate it depend rather on the general sense and scope of Scripture, while their opponents are hindered from accepting it by certain difficult passages, especially in the teaching of Jesus, which seem to proclaim the finality and irrevocability of the doom of the wicked.

## I

Let us first consider the arguments for this theory which rise from the revealed character of God, and of His purpose for humanity.

Christianity represents God as Holy Love, and as the Sovereign Lord of the Universe. Restorationists find it impossible to doubt that He has laid out the whole scheme of things in such a way that His beneficent will must in the end triumph over all obstacles which created beings can oppose to it. Sin is the chief of these obstacles. In order to overcome it, He has implanted certain principles of betterment in the world, and He sent His Son to die in order that its evil work might be defeated. As James Freeman Clarke has

expressed it, "The power of the human will to resist God is indeed indefinite, but the power of love is infinite. Sooner or later then, in the economy of the ages, all sinners must come back in penitence and shame to the Father's house."[1] Even the ancient prophet could say of God, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his wicked way and live" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11); and can we, who have seen the glory of God's redeeming purpose shining in the face of Jesus Christ, doubt that He can allow that purpose to be finally defeated? And defeated it would be, if one soul remained finally unredeemed, as truly as it would if all were lost. Rather than that should happen, God would follow up His redeeming work in His Son by chastisements and punishments continued through untold ages, but the purpose of these would always be remedial, and they could not fail at last to purify every soul of its evil stain. To this religious argument is sometimes added a philosophical. God's will must work through all the contradictions and anomalies of the world to a final synthesis, and the only synthesis of a world of moral conflict is the unifying of all wills in love and obedience to the Universal will: it is a synthesis, that is, of reconciliation, in which all things are made subject to Him in holy assent.

The fatal flaw in this line of reasoning is that in order to vindicate the character and saving purpose of God, injustice is wrought to the sanctity of the moral order. In the first place, it posits a principle of veiled determinism as rigid as that of Calvinism, the difference

[1] *Orthodoxy, Its Truths and Errors*, chap. xiv.

being that in the Calvinistic scheme God's will is throughout absolute and supra-moral, since men's destiny is not determined by their conduct but by the secret decrees of God, predestinating some to eternal destruction, and others to everlasting life, while in the Universalist Scheme God's will is strictly moral in that He decrees the salvation of all men. The absolute victory of God can, however, be gained only on one condition—the free consent of His creatures. This shifts the ground of hope from theological to anthropological grounds. The character and sovereignty of God guarantees that He will do all that Divine love can do to ensure the redemption of all souls; but does the nature of man guarantee that he will infallibly at long last surrender to its appeal? In other words, are the conditions of moral freedom such that we can confidently forecast the issue of men's final choices?

Before we pass on to the latter point, it is needful to say a word on the new Determinism which lies at the root of the Restorationist position. This has been expressed by a distinguished American theologian, Dr. G. A. Gordon in his "Ingersoll" lecture on "Immortality and the New Theodicy." "Determinism simply means that, inasmuch as God is a reasonable Being, and purposes for man a reasonable good, and inasmuch as man is essentially and permanently a reasonable creature, it would appear that the Divine persuasions must be finally availing. And so long as God remains Eternal Reason, so long as man continues a reasonable being, and so long as His Maker proposes for him a reasonable good, and moves upon that good in a strength of Divine persuasions, moral necessity and moral

freedom will mean but different names for the same reality."[1] This seems to us to confound psychological possibility with moral necessity. If human freedom means anything it must mean the power to accept or reject the alternatives of moral choice; and if at any moment this possibility exists in the case of a particular soul, that *possibility must continue so long as that soul exists in freedom.* To say therefore that the Divine persuasion must in the end be triumphant can never be more than a postulate of faith; there is no necessity in the case. It is legitimate to *hope* that all will be well at last; it is illegitimate to affirm this hope as a certainty.

What then becomes of the Sovereignty of the Divine will? Is God liable to failure in the carrying out of His plans for the good of man? Sovereignty is an ambiguous word. It may mean the power to impose one's will victoriously on an enemy, and coerce him into consent by forcibly breaking his opposition. In this case there are no moral factors at work: might simply triumphs over weakness. Or it may mean the power of so using the energies of an unconquerably hostile will as to make them minister to the Divine purposes in spite of that hostility. This is the truly Christian sense of the word. It does not imply that God can ever force a soul into willing assent to His holy purpose, but that let all evil wills in the Universe do their worst, He will yet not fail to use that worst to fulfil His own purpose. The crowning illustration of this principle is seen in the way in which the evil forces that drove Jesus to the Cross and compassed His death were made to further,

[1] *Immortality and the New Theodicy*, pp. 102, 104.

instead of defeating, His saving work; their triumph was really their failure, while through His seeming failure He really attained His lasting victory. So it is legitimate to believe that God will ultimately triumph over all the evil forces of the Universe, or make them minister to His sovereign will of good. We may even go further and entertain the hope that this will ultimately involve the rescue of every created being from the dominance and love of evil. To go beyond that is to cross the line that for ever divides the mechanical or necessitarian order of reality from the moral, which must be for ever a realm of free relationships between God and man.

## II

The Restorationist theory also fails to do justice to the nature of man as a free agent.

Dr. Gordon posits two propositions, that men are "essentially and permanently reasonable beings," and that "man's irrationality is something that he has brought up with him from the animal world."[1] He is a being not made but in the making. On the one side he is the inheritor of brute instincts and passions that are no part of his inherent nature, but a legacy which it is his business to slough off that he may ultimately become purely human, which he can never fully be till he has linked himself in loving obedience to His Maker. This is profoundly true in essence, but the conclusion that lies implicit in Dr. Gordon's argument does not legitimately follow. For while the normal pathway of human

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 100, 101.

development is as suggested, the facts do not justify us in believing that the process is actually followed in the case of many men. The crucial fact in our nature is that we are placed in a strait between two alternative paths. On the one side there is that in us which is akin to the brute—a whole mass of desires and instincts that tend to drag us backward; on the other, a hierarchy of moral possibilities in which these lower forces may be used for the evolution of our distinctive destiny as children of the Highest. The path of rationality and virtue is upward, the path of irrationality and sin is downward. It depends on the free action of the will which path each soul shall take. So strong is the downward pull of the "natural man" that the best men often cry out with Paul, "Who shall deliver me from this deadly body?" Nor are the unaided "resident" spiritual forces within us ever strong enough to ensure the victory. But man on the highest side of his nature is in touch with Divine energies which lend themselves graciously to his need, and those who avail themselves of these are able to cry out triumphantly, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now if man were practically, what he is ideally (rather than actually), a completely rational creature, he would not fail to avail himself of this Divine help to throw off the brute inheritance and rise into possession of his true humanity. We know, however, how hard it is to persuade men to do this. An enormous proportion decline to respond to the call: they are satisfied with a life of animality and self-seeking, which rejects or ignores the higher alternative without compunction. Others hover uncertainly all their lives

between the two paths in a state of unstable moral equilibrium which in the end forfeits the prize of victory. In this life at least it is the few who whole-heartedly rise into a "newness of life" in which the spiritual possibilities of our nature are realised. And if it be suggested that what the ministries of grace fail to accomplish with so many in this life, will be attained by all in the life to come, this is a pure venture of faith for which there is no objective evidence. That many, or most, who have here been heavily weighted with congenital tendencies, whose tyranny death may lighten by freeing them from the body, or who have had but a poor opportunity of overcoming the immense pressure of an unfavourable environment, or to whom the possibilities of the higher life have been imperfectly made known, may hereafter do so, we are permitted to hope; but that *all* will do so *there*, when so many fail to rise to their call *here* under the most favourable circumstances, is an optimistic affirmation which has no basis outside the kindly imagination of those who persist in believing it in spite of many disquieting facts.

One other point here. It is often suggested that this life being one of probation, and the future one of punishment for the wicked, we are justified in believing that under the stress of this discipline all the wicked will be redeemed. This position implies two assumptions: that the aim of Divine punishment is altogether remedial, and that it must ultimately be successful in its object. The first of these assumptions may be conceded without allowing the latter. There is punishment for sin in this world also, but however beneficent its aim, it often fails to attain its purpose. Men are often

hardened by the consequences of sin, or they are weakened thereby into permanent discouragement. Its effects depend entirely on the temper in which they meet it. What is a "savour of life unto life" to one man, may be a "savour of death unto death" to another. We no longer think of God's judgments as vindictive or merely retributory; but are we justified in thinking that all who are made moral by this life's chastisements must necessarily alter their attitude in the Beyond? There is no evidence for such a conclusion.

## III

If we inquire into the teaching of Jesus we shall, we venture to think, find much to justify the above criticisms on the Restorationist position.

We do not refer here to the particular passages attributed to Him which seem to suggest the doctrine of eternal punishment, the "everlasting fire," the "worm that never dieth," the "fire that is not quenched," the sin that shall "not be forgiven," etc. The idea that these expressions imply a probation limited to this life, and that in the other our sole function will be to reap the fruits of our earthly sowing, is purely traditional. They do not raise that question at all: they are sharply Apocalyptic in form and refer to particular *ad hoc* problems arising out of the conduct and attitude of His hearers to the Messianic message. It is only by eliminating this Apocalyptic element and extracting the spiritual principle left that we can realise the permanent lesson of these dread sayings. They then resolve themselves into solemn warnings of the tremendous issues

that depend on the neglect of moral opportunity, and the undying consequences of spiritual sloth and indifference. As such they strike the inevitable note, and raise no ethical problems. It is only when they are wrested from their context and interpreted as absolute statements, or as referring to the finality of death for all probation, that they plunge us into trouble and perplexity. In any case we do not hold that they preclude the possibility of redemption for all in the life to come.

At the same time it is not possible to infer any such theory as Universal Restoration from the words of Jesus, and certainly not from His practical bearing to those who heard Him. He nowhere deals with the subject of probation after death: His whole care and solicitude is for living men, and His attitude ever and always is expressed in such words as the Apostle uses, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Two sharp and decided notes recur again and again in His teaching. First, life's opportunities are many and real, but they pass and do not recur; and secondly, evanescent as they are, they carry within them possibilities of precious and immortal gains, and liabilities of unending loss. *Carpe diem!* (in the noblest sense of that much abused term) is the perpetual note of His parables and appeals. "Life is just our chance of learning love"—that is the message of Jesus to the world; therefore neglect not the passing chances, the least of which may lead to issues of eternal life or death.

Restorationists again dwell with emphasis on the saving purpose of Jesus, and find it hard to believe that

it can possibly fail in the end. In taking up such a position they invest Him with the Divine significance which properly belongs to His person and message. But does the attitude of Jesus in any single incident of His life suggest that He shared this confidence? On the other hand, Universalist as He is in His appeals to men, His bearing towards all is one of tender and unending solicitude rather than of confidence as to their reception of His message. He proclaims the absolute willingness of the Father to save and bless them, and He pleads with them, persuades them, urges them by all the manifold wiles of a loving eloquence to come "into the fold," to "enter into Kingdom," to "follow Him," to "take hold on Eternal life," etc. But there is always the implication that the ultimate issue depends on men, not on God, and that if they do not accept His invitation, there is no power on earth or in Heaven that can save them. Again, both the words and the experience suggest that it is not all men by any means, but rather (in this life at least) the few who do enter into relation of obedient fellowship with God, which means eternal life. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not," while on earth; and though after His resurrection a mightier spirit was sent forth from Him than could be centred in His physical presence, the same result was speedily manifested on a wider scale. The Gospel of the Epistles as truly as of the Synoptists is one that *appeals* to men, but never *coerces* them, nor do the writers ever give the slightest suggestion that the appeal will be finally successful with all. Rather they contemplate the prospect of an eternal loss or perdition for some men, owing to their hard and disobedient

hearts. Hence the urgency of their appealing note, and the emphasis of their repeated warnings. We may say with Professor Salmond that all the Universalist sayings of the New Testament are "limited by the general New Testament doctrine that the actual effects of Christ's work are conditioned by the spiritual attitudes of men."[1] There is nothing irresistible even in the Cross of Christ, else, why do so many resist it? "The awe of Christ's words and the urgency of the appeals of His Gospel to men lie precisely in this possibility that a love so absolute in its claims, so patient in its endeavour, so boundless in its resources, may yet be withstood to the end."[2]

## IV

We cannot, however, part from this idyllic, if fanciful, hypothesis concerning human destiny on this note of denial and rejection. If as a final theory Restorationism fails to substantiate itself in view of the fundamental facts of personality and of the general bearing of Scripture, it has not been empty or useless as a contribution towards our doctrine of the Last Things. It has succeeded in bringing about three most desirable results.

1. For one thing it has succeeded in *vindicating the character of God* against the harsh and immoral doctrine that the creature has no rights as regards His Maker. God, it was once believed, can do as He likes with His own, can either save or damn any soul He has

[1] *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 641.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 649.

made, and we have no right to call Him into account. Such was the Calvinist creed; and so far it was no Christian creed. It made salvation depend in the last resort on non-ethical (may we not say *un*-ethical?) considerations. In so doing it removed the idea of God from all relation to human morality, by denying our right to argue from our natural sense of justice to the dealings of God towards men. John Stuart Mill's indictment[1] of this kind of theology will recur to many readers. Restorationism, by returning to Jesus' method of reasoning concerning God,[2] did a great service. It refused to believe that what would be wrong in a man (*e.g.*, consigning an enemy to eternal torment) could be right in God, and so insisted on asking whether it was true that God could do such a thing; and in claiming that the testimony of our highest intuitions is a safe guide to a knowledge of God's method of dealing with us, it reinforced morality by Divine sanctions and endowed religion with a richer content.

2. Collaterally, it *helped to reopen the closed question of human probation.* It forced men to ask themselves whether the doctrine could be considered Christian which limited all moral choices to this life. Once the question was asked, it was seen that such a position was confused, unjust and based on a pure assumption. People in general did not doubt it because it had always been taken for granted. If such a belief was implied in the Christian creed, it was a legacy from Judaistic

[1] *Essays on Religion.*

[2] "If ye, then, *being evil,* know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* will your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt. vii. 11).

Eschatology, and taken over by the Christian Church without examination or question, till some of the finer thinkers began to open up the subject and to revolt against the current belief. Once raised, the problem could not be left permanently unsettled, but must be carried to some conclusion. Catholic theology in the Early Middle Ages modified it in so far as to formulate the doctrine of Purgatory; Protestant thought, with its literalistic and unhistoric notion of Scripture, relapsed into the earlier view; and we owe the Universalists a great debt for insisting on dealing faithfully with a dogma so unyielding, and a conception of God so hard and unethical.

3. The Optimistic note in Restorationism, even though we may hold it to be carried too far, has done much *to restore the balance of thought* after the sombre outlook provided by the traditional theology. It filled the horizon beyond death with welcome light, as of the rising of the morning after the horrors of a nightmare-ridden night. It reintroduced us to the compassionate God of Jesus. It provided scope in the eternal world as well as here for the operation of grace and mercy and truth. It enabled us to think of the Saviour as working in Eternity as once He did on earth to bring the wayward and the lost to the heavenly home prepared for them. All this was pure gain for Religion. And in the modified form of the Larger Hope, which refuses to despair altogether of anyone, least of all of God's pursuing and pardoning love, it has taken its place permanently as part of the Christian outlook on the future. Neander's wise words give a form of this faith to which most of us gladly bow: "The doctrine of a

universal restitution does not stand in contradiction to the doctrine of eternal punishment, as it appears in the Gospels; for although those who are hardened in wickedness, left to the consequences of their conduct, their merited fate, have to expect endless unhappiness; yet a secret degree of the Divine compassion is not necessarily excluded by virtue of which, through the wisdom of God revealing itself in the discipline of free agents, they will be led to a free appropriation of redemption."[1]

[1] *History of the Planting of Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 531 (Bohn's translation).

# CHAPTER IV

## CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY

"On that wonderful day
When I am still on the bed,
Smile through your weeping and say,
'Gone by the upland way!'
Do *not* say I am dead.

Say I am done with the flowers,
Blown no sooner than shed
Under the trampling hours;
Tell of the windless bowers:
Do *not* say I am dead.

Say I *am* freed from the fires
Heated seven times red,
Heart that vainly aspires,
Hunger of vain desires:
Do *not* say I am dead.

Speak of that life in the vast,
Fresh from its Fountain and Head;
Say: 'Tis the dying is past!'
Say: 'He is living at last!'
Do *not* say I am dead."

WADE ROBINSON.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY

"Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."—PAUL.

THE theory of Universal Restoration for all, as well as that of Eternal Punishment for the wicked, assumes the natural or inherent immortality of the human soul. It does not contemplate the possibility of its extinction at any point of Time or Eternity. It is somewhat strange that this position has been so persistently taken for granted by the bulk of Christian thinkers. Historically it may perhaps be traced back to the influence of Greek thinkers—of whom Plutarch says that "the idea of annihilation was intolerable to the Greek mind," and that "almost all, men and women both, would have surrendered themselves to the teeth of Cerberus, or the buckets of the Danaides, rather than to nonentity." But there is probably a deeper reason for this attitude, which is to be found in the instinctive belief of the soul in its own persistence—a belief that was raised into the dignity of a philosophical dogma by Plato, who taught the indestructibility of the human mind or soul, as having neither beginning nor end—a tenet passed on by him to the Neo-Platonists, whose influence was so paramount over the early Church. It has thus come

about that the doctrine of annihilation, which is "logically the earliest, is historically the latest view."[1]

The natural immortality of the soul, however, has been challenged by individual writers from very early times. Some would carry this view as far back as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Polycarp. The first writer, however, who speaks on this side with clear and emphatic voice is Arnobius in the third century, since whose time sporadic adherents of the belief have appeared at long intervals. Faustus Socinus taught that man was naturally mortal, but was capable of attaining immortality by an act of grace. Among modern philosophers Hobbes and Locke propounded the theory of final annihilation after a period of punishment. But it was reserved for the last century to produce any large crop of writers who seriously and even aggressively advocated this theory of destiny. The list includes the well-known names of Archbishop Whately, Bishop Hampden, Edward White (whom Salmond[2] calls the "Coryphæus of this school of thought"), J. B. Heard, Dr. R. W. Dale, Prebendaries Row and Constable, in this country; Professors Petavel-Oliff, Richard Rothe, Wendt, Secretan, Bruston, Sabatier, Kabisch, Kirn, Haering, and others, on the Continent; and L. C. Baker, L. W. Bacon, J. H. Pettingell, W. S. D. McConnell, and Lyman Abbott, in America. All these, while developing the argument on their own lines, are agreed on the fundamental principle that man is not immortal in virtue of his original constitution,

[1] Alger, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 54.

[2] *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 594.

but may be made immortal by an act of grace. They agree also in holding that while man is not immortal, all men survive death; some believing that there will be another chance for those who have not deliberately rejected the Gospel in this life; others, that the wicked will simply be punished before being destroyed.

## I

It is difficult (and unnecessary) to collate in any detail the views of these various writers or to review the grounds on which they believe man to be mortal by nature. Most of them wrote before the historical view of the Bible was formulated, and some were hampered by the literalist view of Scripture which they shared with their contemporaries. Many of their exegetical arguments therefore have lost their cogency, though others remain in force. Our best plan will be to deal with the problem in general terms, making reference to the literature of the question only by way of illustration.

In so far as the theory in question is based on Scripture, we must bear in mind the many phases of thought represented in its various books. *There is no consistent psychology of the spiritual nature of man in the Bible.* As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the doctrine of Man among the Hebrews had a long and adventurous history. It was held at all times that death did not end *existence* for mankind; but it is doubtful whether the idea of unending existence as an inalienable attribute of the human soul was held by any of the Old Testament writers. It is unlikely that such an idea occurred to them at all. The battle of progressive

religion was not with the idea of extinction, but with the primitive non-moral conception of *Sheol* as the dim abode of the dead, for good and bad alike. Natural death in the earlier stages of religious thought was held to involve separation of the soul from the body, from the land of the living, and from the presence of Jahweh. We have seen how slowly the idea of *Sheol* was moralised—*i.e.*, made to fit in with the intuitive cry of the soul for the vindication of virtue and the punishment of sin in the after-life. Immortality as a *religious* conception—*i.e.*, as a state where the ethical consequences of life on earth were brought to fruition—only became possible when the doctrine of God had reached its truly Theistic stage, and the general position of the later Old Testament and Apocalyptic writers was that while man's future existence was ensured in virtue of his psychological nature, his chance of a fully personal and spiritually satisfying life in the Beyond was dependent on the grace of God, and to be realised only in His loving favour. The wicked were miserable because banished from His vivifying and redeeming presence. So far, however, it is clear that the future state was conceived of as fixed and unalterable. There was no door from heaven to hell, or *vice versa*. As a man died so he continued; but whether the wicked continued for ever in unending torment, or were finally destroyed, was a problem which does not seem to have been clearly envisaged at any time, though individual writers may be quoted in favour of either alternative.

In New Testament times the background of belief as to the fate of the wicked was sombre and indefinite. Jesus uses the imagery of current beliefs as the frame-

work of His parabolic teaching, but the framework must not—as we have seen—be identified with His own distinctive message. What is original to Himself is not the Apocalyptic element in His teaching, but those ideas which are thrown into a "biological rather than an eschatological form," and which refer to the central facts and energies of the spiritual life. To these we shall presently return. Here the question is whether we can find any indication in His distinctive teaching of the immortal nature of the soul. Did He believe with the Pharisees in an unending punishment for the wicked, or, with the school of Hillel, that after a period of acute suffering, both body and soul were consumed? The following extract from Dr. Winstanley's work on *Jesus and the Future* sums up the case from a cautious annihilationist point of view: "Mindful of the divergent views which were then held, and recalling the Jewish upbringing of the Incarnate Lord, we are inclined to believe that the final issue which was in prospect for the ungodly—after due cognisance of doom and acknowledgment of the justice of the Divine exclusion—was adumbrated in expressions like perishing, destruction, loss of life, fire, Gehenna. Terrible as is the loss depicted by such terms, no authentic utterance of Jesus appears certainly to presuppose for the condemned unending suffering or even unending persistence. The expressions seem to have stood for a fate which—whether rapid or not as we measure time—we should designate annihilation or extinction. But the data are insufficient for a solution of the question—perhaps intentionally so, perhaps rather because of the unexpected immediateness of the answer to men's speculations on

the subject of the near advent of the Kingdom itself."[1] On the other hand, we have to bear in mind that in the time of our Lord the notion of man's immortality had become widespread if not universal, except among the Sadducees, who held the materialistic doctrine that death was the end of the body and soul alike. To quote Professor H. R. Mackintosh: "It is simple historical accuracy to say that the New Testament writers assumed the immortality of the soul; for them the existence of the soul after death in bliss or woe was unending. Some of the most recent exponents of Conditionalism virtually grant this by abandoning silently the effort to make out Scripture proof. By doing so, they get rid of an embarrassment; on the other hand, it is a grave disadvantage to any theory to have against it the religious conviction of the Scripture as a whole."[2] We hold that in this deliverance Professor Mackintosh is nearer to the facts than Dr. Winstanley, whose hesitancy is clearly marked. Apart from theological considerations it is doubtful if interpreters of the text of the New Testament would ever have disagreed on this matter. The plain meaning of Scripture unmistakably tells in one way. Christianity, both in its Scriptural and historic form, presupposes the natural and inherent immortality of the human soul.

## II

We pass to some of the difficulties of the Conditionalist position.

1. All the writers of this school, while denying the

[1] *Jesus and the Future*, p. 316.
[2] *Immortality and the Future*, p. 222.

immortal nature of the soul, assume its survival of bodily death. They agree at least in this with their opponents—that death does not end our existence. But such an assumption raises an initial difficulty. If man is mortal by nature, why should he be conceived of as surviving death at all? Would not the logic of the case suggest that the natural term of our spiritual existence coincided with the existence of body *qua* body? On such a supposition, two alternatives seem open to us: either to believe that men survive in order to have a further chance of redemption in another life, or that they do so simply for punitive purposes, as a make-weight for the fact that in this life the retributive punishment of sin is insufficient. This position implies that God must correct a flaw in the moral conditions of the present life by working a miracle at its close. In such a case "the impenitent do not rise *qua* men, for man as man is punishable; they do not rise as believers, for they are not such; they rise, therefore, by an act of divine Omnipotence in order to receive the just reward of their deeds."[1] Those Conditionalists who deny future probation are thus in a very unsatisfactory position, their theory of destiny, as a French writer puts it, "having all the inconveniences and none of the advantages of a compromise." It is doubtful if such a theory could win a permanent place in human belief. This objection, however, does not appear to us to apply equally to the alternative hypothesis that men survive death in order that they may enter on another term of probation, for this presents an adequate religious motive for a con-

[1] Mackintosh, *Immortality and the Future*, p. 227.

tinued existence. This, however, is not what most advocates of Conditionalism contend for. Far more consonant with the revealed character of God, and with the facts of human nature would it be to hold that while man is naturally immortal, and possibly has another probationary chance hereafter, the finally impenitent, as soon as a certain state of fixity of evil character is attained, will be miraculously and mercifully put out of existence. There is an increasing number of Christian believers who appear to hold this view. And this view is sounder, both religiously and psychologically, than that which asserts punishment to be so destructive in its influence on character, that ultimate sinfulness must by an inevitable law destroy the soul that clings to it. To this the answer has been well made, that "character and personality or selfhood are not the same." So far as observation of this life is concerned, the worst forms of evil, which are most destructive in their influence on character, in no way impair the integrity of personality. The sinner is not less of a man than the saint; he is only a different man. The old conception of the devil as the very incarnation of evil was of a vivid, resourceful being whose active powers of mischief were in direct proportion to his wholehearted wickedness.

2. The Conditional theory emasculates and weakens the conception of personality. It relates man too organically with the brute, and ignores his distinctive features as a being above as well as within nature. Edward White speaks of death as the "breaking up of the human monad"; that "just as water is put an end to when the combining oxygen and hydrogen are separated," so "when the complex man is dissolved he

is dead"[1] and disappears. In that case, his survival after death for any purpose is a miracle indeed: it is nothing less than a fresh act of creation! All the higher intuitions of the soul—its vast scope for good or evil, its outreach into the immensities of moral and spiritual being, its instinctive intimations of immortality, its identification with a world of eternal values, its passionate aspiration after a hierarchy of moral ideals, its scorn of death as a mere incident in a larger heritage of life, give the lie to this crude conception of his nature. "The notion of a soul immortal enough to live after death, but not immortal enough to live for ever, is too childish for anyone to believe beyond the little school of literalists who delight in it. The world outside will be content to believe that that which proves its powers to live through death claims its immortality."[2] Jesus at least did not make His approach to the soul on such a theory of human nature, but addressed man as a being of infinite potentialities for good and evil, weal or woe, both here and hereafter; the possessor of an awful freedom, and of an endless life; a personality so nearly akin to the Creator's that even in his sinful state he has qualities Divine enough to make it legitimate to argue from the ways of man to the ways of God (Matt. vii. 11); nay, a being so great and precious in the sight of God that the Incarnation and the Cross were not too great a price to pay for his redemption. The fact that "He took upon Himself not the nature of angels, but of

[1] *Life in Christ*, p. 106. This is a very loose and materialistic way of speaking of the soul.

[2] J. Baldwin Brown, *The Doctrine of Annihilation in the Light of the Gospel of Love*, p. 64.

men," in His incarnation, proves human nature to be on a plane of dignity which could not belong to him were he a creature perishable as the brutes; and the fact that Jesus died and rose again in our nature proclaims the grandeur of that nature in spite of the ruin that sin had made of it. Jesus indeed did not, according to the New Testament, create, but only "brought to light" life and immortality, discovering man to himself, and setting his seal on our inherent passion for a life that never ends. On this position all the Apostolic writers build as on a sure foundation. It is the fountain-head of their vision of man, and sin, and destiny; it is the ground of their passionate willingness to spend and be spent for souls; it is the explanation of their earnest appeals for repentance, and of the horror with which they view the fate of the impenitent. The same note of urgency and solicitude is seen in the great Christian preachers and thinkers of all subsequent ages. When for any reason that note goes, we may be sure that something distinctive of the Christian faith disappears.

## III

A fresh development of the Conditionalist theory of future destiny has taken place since the rise of evolutionary science and philosophy, and has recently had an increasing vogue in Germany. This has recently been well expounded by Dr. W. S. D. McConnell in his interesting volume, *The Evolution of Immortality*. There is here so much that meets the conditions of current thought that it is worthy of somewhat detailed treatment.

Dr. McConnell's argument is based on strictly biological grounds. "It is a biological process we are seeking to trace, and a biological classification we attempt to discover. It may be that the biological classification we are in search of may turn out to be a religious one. . . . What we maintain is that if any human life becomes capable of passing on to another life with personality intact, it will be because such a life has already reached such a state of spiritual fixedness and stability which will make survival 'realisable' and destruction 'unnatural' to it, and that such an achievement, if reached at all, must be by an extension of the long path by which the soul has climbed up from the primordial slime."[1]

This evolution of a soul capable of surviving its physical organism is, according to this theory, the last great achievement of the upward push of life. All through the lower orders and up to this point everything is sacrificed to the continuance of life in the species. The individual is valuable only as a link in a chain, as a chalice to carry and pass on to another generation the precious wine of vitality; once this has been done, his biological function is fulfilled, and he begins to die. Now if individual immortality is to become law, nothing less is necessary than a reversal of this elemental law. It is clear that that can only be reached if an individual be found who is intrinsically stronger than his species. "Up to this point, life sweeps round everlastingly in a closed circle, from seed through plant to seed again, and so about continually. If escape from it be ever possible it must be at a tangent, and by

[1] *Evolution of Immortality*, p. 85.

some kind of individual whose life orbit sweeps far away enough from its material centre to be caught in some mighty attraction from beyond."[1]

The upward movement of life thus arrives at last at the point of producing an individual who has broken the entail of mortality. When was this point reached? It has been reached at least in some men. Dr. McConnell does not hold that man is necessarily immortal, but he affirms his immortability. He denies the essential difference between the human soul *per se* and the animal soul, but claims that the former at least has in it a principle in virtue of which it is *capable* of acquiring the property of survival and possibly of an endless existence in another state. All men, however, are not capable of this great leap from mortality to immortality, and not all men who are thus capable of it actually attain to it. Nor would he confidently affirm that man alone of earthly creatures is possessed of this quality. "The simple fact is that in the attempt to trace the origin, development, and destiny of the soul, the materialist classification of 'man' and 'animal' must be disregarded. In advance one dare not say where the line between immortal and mortal creatures will be found. It may conceivably coincide with the one which marks off Genus *Homo*, Class *Mammalia*, Order *Primates*, or may be *found to run below that, so as to include many of man's humble kinsmen.* Or it may be found necessary to settle upon *a line running irregularly through and amidst the ranks of man. . . . It may turn out that all whom we call men are not man.*"[2] He

[1] *Evolution of Immortality*, pp. 89-90.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 52. The italics are ours.

contrasts the low psychical capacities of the Bushmen, Hottentots, and Pygmies of Africa, with those of the higher brutes, and claims that "measured by psychic standards, the interval between the lowest man and the highest is a hundredfold greater than between the lowest man and the highest brute."[1] "What we are seeking is a spiritual organism which would be at once worth keeping permanently in existence, and which has been sufficiently developed to cohere through and after the shock of the dissolution of its physical basis."[2] When and where is such an individual to be found?

It is found where the moral nature has so developed and asserted the mastery that it has triumphed over the merely psychical and animal nature. It is not enough to have a potential faculty for goodness, for brutes have that (?), nor will the actual manifestation of a rudimentary ethical sense suffice, "but only a moral structure developed far enough to take command over the turbulent appetites and errant thoughts will serve the end. . . ." "The place of escape from the closed ring of what we call nature is not the body nor the mind, but the conscience,"[3] and a conscience, we may add, which has come to such maturity that it carries the soul into assured sovereignty over the vagrant, self-regarding tyranny of the "natural" man. The secret of eternal life lies in a spiritually vitalised moral sense. This is the strait gate, this is the narrow way that leadeth to life.

Our author now turns to the teaching and Person of Christ, and in both directions he finds a startling corro-

[1] *Evolution of Immortality*, p. 53. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100.

boration of his position. As regards the former he sharply distinguishes between the Apocalyptic form into which much of the teaching is thrown, and the essential message. This is found in a series of utterances which, when brought together, resolve themselves into a treatise on life and death. The real question with Jesus is not of rewards and punishments, but of *living* or *perishing*. "The Gospels are biological altogether" —at least in their images. Jesus begins by stating the situation in terms which the zoologist knows to be true of life at every stage. "Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. . . . He that hath My word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not pass to catastrophe, but hath passed out of death into life. . . . That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised, therefore, when I say unto you that, except a man be born from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. . . . So as the Father quickeneth the dead, and maketh them living, so the Son quickeneth whom He will. . . . I declare unto you that if a man keep my sayings he shall never see death,"[1] etc. "The revelation of Jesus was thus a revelation of possible life." He makes the appeal to the *instinct of living* the strongest and most persistent in our nature. "If you devote your energies to building up your lower life, you will lose everything, because it comes to an end, but if you disregard it in the interests

[1] *Evolution of Immortality*, pp. 110-112.

of the eternal Gospel of goodness, you will find an æonian life. What is this but the enunciation of the last term of the long series of Organic Evolution? And is it not supremely trustworthy as being the dictum of the final personality who came Himself only in the 'fulness of time'?"[1]

When we turn from the teaching to the person of Christ and follow His career, we find, according to Dr. McConnell, a unique illustration of the truth of that teaching. For he stands out in history as at once the supreme instance of a perfectly holy personality, and as the one who in virtue of what he was triumphed manifestly over physical death. The story of the resurrection of Jesus as the crown and vindication of his life is the essential element of the Christian Gospel. It was as a Gospel of resurrection that He "was thus first preached." "This was the good news, because first of all it was *all* news." This was the preaching of the Apostles, that in the Person of Jesus "life and immortality were brought to light." "Their argument was that the man Jesus had definitely realised the process whereby a natural human being might attain to the possession of a life so exalted in quality and so tenacious in substance that corporal death could not break it down: that He had achieved it for Himself at incalculable cost; that He had passed through death and conquered it, having shown himself to be alive 'by many infallible proofs'; and that in this He had become a kind of first fruits of a human harvest which might be great or small as the event should prove."[2] "Thus, to sum all up, the Gospel contained in the resurrection of

[1] *Evolution of Immortality*, p. 113. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Christ is the last term in an evolutionary process which began with the Eternal chaos and reaches its culmination in the man become immortal. . . . This way is the 'Way of Life' from the protoplasmic slime to the Son of Man!"[1]

## IV

1. This new version of the Conditionalist theory, while it contains a great truth, is, in the first place, a signal instance of the fallacy of attempting to reason from a striking analogy to a logical conclusion. Our suspicions are aroused at the outset by the open claim of the author that "it is a biological process we are seeking to trace," which in the end may prove to be a religious one." This book belongs to the fascinating but perilous style of literature of which Professor Henry Drummond's book, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, is a classic instance. Biology is not theology, though it often furnishes very striking religious analogies. The laws of physical life cannot be applied to the soul as though spiritual processes were but a continuation in another sphere of the vital processes that go on in the body. Each stage and grade of reality has its own laws, and while each is interwoven and dovetailed into the next below it, the categories of the lower do not necessarily (if at all) apply to the higher. And though there is continuity of a kind from the lowest organisms to the highest, the latter are hemmed in by limitations from which the former have escaped. The higher we go, the less does the principle of analogy help us, and the oftener it proves delusive and perilous.

[1] *Evolution of Immortality*, p. 154.

2. Dr. McConnell's refusal to accept the usual classification which recognises the uniqueness of man among earthly creatures is not likely to find much acceptance. True, there are wide psychological differences between one race and another, which differ as much in mental calibre as in physical stature; but these differences are equally striking between the lowest and highest specimens of any race. This does not in the least obliterate the unbridgable chasm between the lowest men and the highest animals. Fully allowing for all the congenital differences between man and man, and race and race, there is always the possibility of physical intermixture, of intellectual understanding, and of spiritual fellowship, between men the wide world over. It is environment, early training, varying standards of education and caste, and not generic distinctions, which divide them into such contrasted groups, social and national. Man is man everywhere and always; wherever found he has in him, latent or patent, the capacity for moral conduct, self-conscious freedom, and religious aspiration, these being the essential marks of personality and the foretokens of immortality.

3. Dr. McConnell's theological positions are equally untrustworthy. Take only one instance. In his interpretation of the teaching of Jesus he falls into the obvious fallacy of identifying His use of the words "life," "death," "destruction," "perishing," with the merely physical, biological sense of these very ambiguous words. This vitiates the whole argument drawn from this source. For not to Jesus only, but to all the New Testament (and some of the Old Testament) writers, these words stood not for physical but for moral realities. Life was

not existence *per se*, but life in God and for God; death was not the cessation of being, but existence apart from fellowship with God, or under His disfavour and wrath. It is simply not true (as we have already seen) that Jesus, nor yet His contemporaries (with the exception of the Sadducean school), believed that physical death ended human existence for either good or bad men. Such key words as "perdition," "loss," "destruction," "perishing," "eternal life," "immortality"—these stood for qualitative and intensive, not merely factual and extensive ideas. Thus when, in the fourth Gospel, Jesus is credited with saying, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life"; and "He that keepeth My sayings, he shall never see death," He is clearly speaking not of a physical fact but of a spiritual condition. Unquestionably both Jesus and the Apostles often spoke of physical death in the usual sense,[1] but their *distinctive* use of the word always connoted this higher sense. Everywhere and always for them true life was more than existence, death was other than merely physical dissolution. Life without fellowship with God as its quickening and nourishing matrix was a state of death; while physical death "in Him" was an entrance into a fuller and ampler life. While an after-existence was ensured to all, whatever their spiritual state, "immortality" or "eternal life" was the prerogative or reward of those only who in this life were joined to the Living God in loving obedience through Jesus

[1] *Cf.* John xi. 4, 25, xxi. 23; Matt. x. 21, xx. 28, xxvi. 38; Rom. viii. 38; Phil. i. 20; Rev. ii. 10; etc.

Christ their Lord. No merely biological terms will express such realities as these, however captivating the analogies suggested by them, and however consonant they may happen to be with prevailing lines of thought in the present day. It is through the poverty of human language, with its resultant confusion of thought, that such specious fallacies of inference are possible.

4. This theory of human nature as being in a state of transition from the merely animal to the truly human would, if substantiated, introduce an element of uncertainty in our intercourse with our fellow-creatures which might have disastrous consequences. Since there would be no outward signs to differentiate those who had attained to the possession of an undying nature, no man would know of his neighbour whether he was addressing a fellow-immortal or a being as perishable as one of his domestic animals. As it has been well put, "There is no escaping the dilemma: either man is made for immortality—he is moral by constitution, and therefore intrinsically a member, good or bad, of the abiding moral world which has God for its abiding centre—or he is not made for immortality: change and decay are his nature; apart from Christ he is, in point of fact, as perishable as the beasts. He is an intelligent animal which may become a child of God; but taking him in his unregenerate condition, there is no appreciable sense in which he is God's child. . . . A view which thus intrudes the notion of caste into the human family puts the sense of brother in danger. . . . The man who adopts the Conditionalist position with serious conviction, regarding it as no longer an hypothesis, but an indubitable certainty, must feel it hard to maintain his

sense of the greatness of the soul—not this soul or that, but all souls. Belief in annihilation, therefore, can be tolerable only to a lover of the race if the very thought of its particular application is kept away. In evangelism, at all events, we must operate with some other view."[1] If we are to preach the Gospel with confidence and effect to every creature (Mark xvi. 15) is can only be by ignoring such an illimitable distinction between one being and another, and by taking for granted, were it but for the sake of the argument, that every hearer possesses an immortal soul. How true all this is may be clearly seen in view of Dr. McConnell's frank but unguarded confession: "As one wanders observantly and thoughtfully amongst the crowds which teem in the purlieus of a great Christian city, as he watches their faces, listens to their meagre speech, penetrates to the interior of their shallow lives, realises their brutality and mischievousness and cunning intelligence, becomes familiar with their desires and ideals of life, above all, as he sees their looks of blank insensibility to any moral appeal, he is hard put to it not to ask himself, 'Are these really human?' I confess frankly that when I have tried to speak to certain kinds of men 'of righteousness and of judgment to come,' I have felt the effort was little less vain than would have been the same exhortation to my dog."[2] Any theory which, when consistently followed out, thus brings paralysis on the religious appeal may conceivably be biologically true, but it is certainly not true to the Evangelic conception of man from the Christian standpoint. It thus stands religiously self-condemned.

[1] H. R. Mackintosh, *Immortality and the Future*, pp. 223, 224.
[2] *Evolution of Immortality*, pp. 100-104.

## V

While, however, we are unable to assent to the Conditionalist theory, whether on Scriptural, scientific, or philosophic grounds, the school of thought which has advocated it has—like the Universalist—done good service in the interest of faith; and there is a modified form of it which in our judgment is defensible even from the Christian standpoint, to which we shall recur in the next chapter.

In common with the Universalist school, the Conditionalists have done much to raise and press home the question whether the traditional theory is right in affirming the restriction of probation to this life, the next being a state of retribution or reward for all men to all eternity.

Historically, this problem was never raised to any effect till these two types of thinker insisted on envisaging it with clearness and determination. The motive for both theories was thus a profoundly religious one, and as such they are entitled to respect and consideration. Both agree on the central doctrine of the faith—the infinite holiness and boundless love of God for all His creatures; but they differ profoundly in their doctrine of man: the one assumed his natural immortality, the other his natural mortality, but his "immortability" or potential immortality. We hold that in their doctrine of God they are both right; and in their doctrine of man, both wrong, though in different directions. The Universalist and the Conditionalist consider it unthinkable that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ should condemn even unrepentant men, however

wicked, to everlasting torment after the brief, contingent, and uncertain probationary chances of this life, without taking into just account the infinite differences of spiritual condition between them, or giving them an opportunity to reverse their earthly attitude in the life to come. The Universalist, assuming the essential mortality of the soul, but limiting its possibilities of for ever rejecting the pressure of the divine appeal, finds his solution in the sure triumph of divine grace over the opposition of the human will, thus in effect safe-guarding the final issue at the expense of ultimate moral freedom. The Conditionalist questions the essential immortality of the soul on various grounds (here joining hand with the conclusions of naturalistic science), but holds man to be "immortable," or capable of eternal life through the grace of God. Whether we agree with either or neither, it is a great benefit to religious thought that this question has—for the first time in the history of the Church—been forced into notice and faced with a serious intention of going to the root of the matter. It can never again be relegated to the background, without supreme and disabling loss to faith. Nor is it likely that an attitude even of "reverent agnosticism" as to the fate of the wicked will ever permanently satisfy the Christian mind. However tentative and modest our attitude may be, we surely have enough to go upon in the revelation of God and man given in the Gospel and in the known facts of human nature and of the conditions of our earthly life, to enable us to come to a working hypothesis regarding future destiny. Dogmatism is here entirely out of count, for the factors of the problem stretch dimly on one side into the Unseen,

and are not within our purview; but every man, according to his lights is called upon reverently to face the issue as best he may. And it is pre-eminently the duty of every Christian preacher and teacher to do his utmost to know the mind of God on this supremely important matter. The present paralysis that has fallen on the preaching of the Christian Gospel is largely due to the failure of the Church of Christ (which has, as we believe, unconsciously, if not consciously, given up the traditional faith concerning the Last Things) to formulate and to preach any theory at all concerning them. What fills the Gospels and the Epistles with such vivid lights and shadows, and rings through them with such stern insistence—the issues of life and death and eternity—cannot, we may be sure, be left out of the Christian message without incalculable harm and mischief. And so, having brought our readers to this stage of our argument, we will venture in the next chapter to summarise the conclusions to which, in our judgment, it naturally points. We do so in the hope that whether it commends itself to them as final or not, it will at least help to clear the ground for a considered judgment of their own.

# CHAPTER V

## A CONSTRUCTIVE VIEW

"It is not the assurance of a mere metaphysical immortality that Christ has created. It is the assurance of eternal life. His gift to men is not the inculcation of the truth of an endless existence, not any dogma of the soul's deathless perpetuity, but the revelation of a higher life, and the inspiration of a hope stronger than all speculation, sacredly governing conduct, and accessible to the humblest soul. . . . The certainties of being, the light of eternity, the completions of the future, the achieved ideal of the Divine Kingdom, the recompense of service, the vision of God, the pleasures at His right hand, are the primary and immediate purpose of His teaching. Life, eternal Life, the great reward, the kingdom, the existence like the angels, the inheritance, the throne, the glory, the joy of the Lord, the place prepared, the Father's House—this is that of which His words, whether of hope or of awe, are meant to give assurance."—SALMOND: *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 393, 394.

## CHAPTER V

### A CONSTRUCTIVE VIEW

"He did God's Will; to him, all one
If on the earth, or in the sun."
*The Boy and the Angel.*

THE reader will by this time probably have divined something of the position taken up by the writer on the problem of Future Destiny. It remains for us to gather up the threads of the argument, and put the conclusion before him as clearly as possible.

### I

We hold that Man is by nature immortal. He was not made to die. Formed in the image of God—a complete moral personality at least potentially—he shares in the deathlessness of his Maker. The great change which makes an end to the body has not power to lay a withering hand on the soul. That goes on, in another life, to achieve its spiritual destiny under other conditions, and in an environment where moral issues will probably be plainer and less confused than here.

To such a creature this life is essentially one of probation or trial—the first stage of our moral and spiritual testing, but not the last. This does not mean that it cannot be called a state of education or development

equally well; but in virtue of the perpetual ethical choices presented to us in this life, the word probation does represent what to us seems the central fact for us all. But the probation of all men, while real, is not on a plane of equality for all, since the opportunities for coming to know the supreme issues of life and death, and to be tried knowingly against the highest conceivable ideal standard of character are given to the few, and not the many, in this life. If the Christian revelation of God be true and final, we hold that there must be a continuance of this process of probation and trial in the life to come, for all at least who have not here reached their permanent spiritual attitude in relation to the Great Alternative. It is indeed difficult to conceive of a creature, whose inmost nature is concerned with ethical choices, that any state in which it can find itself here or hereafter is not in a true sense a state of "probation." Heaven itself must in a sense be a sphere of choices between this and that, between a higher and a lower alternative; and *can even Hell be anything else?* True, there is such a thing as a final determination towards certain alternatives; the growth of character indeed implies that the will is continually changing its venue of choices from one standard of values to another. At the same time, though we may have settled our general attitude towards the supreme realities of the moral world, we must still be called upon to reach up to unattained stages of goodness, and win a higher place in the ascending possibilities of holiness; and this can be done only through acts of choice. Contrariwise, if a permanent Hell be a reality, there would be ever deeper depths into which the wicked could descend, if

they do not at some stage of the descent break away from the gravitation of evil, and rise by force of will or power of grace into the attractions of the Upward Way.

## II

The great problem is whether in the Future Life such a possibility of betterment exists for *all*. We hold that *from the Godward side there can never be any bar to this possibility*. We cannot for ourselves conceive it credible that the God revealed and incarnated in Jesus will ever refuse to receive back the worst and most abandoned soul, whether on earth or in nethermost Hell; nay, we can as little conceive it possible that He should ever cease to bring to bear on such a soul the full ministries of His grace and love. However we may interpret that mysterious reference to the descent of Jesus into the world of "spirits in prison" (1 Pet. iii. 19), or the fact that He "preached the Gospel to the dead" (*ibid*. iv. 6) during those three days of His sojourn in the Unseen, whence He came back to His sorrowing disciples with the reassuring words on His lips, "All hail!" it must at least have meant that Peter, who knew and loved his Master so well, believed in the power of that Gospel to reach even to the dead. This, indeed, is but a faint ray of light on the darkness that shrouds the Beyond from our vision, but it is enough to open the door of hope: and hope is but an incipient faith.

On the other hand, *we cannot share* with the Universalists *their confident assurance that in the end, and at long last, there is the same assurance on the manward side that all souls, however abandoned and sinful here, will*

*ultimately turn to God*, and accept His merciful and renewing grace in the other life. We dare not ignore the solemn and terrible words of judgment with which our Lord pronounces the doom of the lost; we dare not affirm that all those who have descended into evil beyond a certain point are ever likely to reverse their choice. All the evidence we have (whether we draw it from experience or observation in this life, or whether we consider the attitude of those who rejected Him knowingly and finally while on earth, or whether we deal with the moral probabilities of the case) suggests that men do sometimes take a final attitude towards the alternatives of good and evil even in this life. There are men of whom it seems impossible not to say that "being past feeling, they have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," and who appear to be beyond any and every appeal to repent. And if it is so here, have we any adequate ground for believing it to be otherwise in the Hereafter? We cannot, of course, speak with anything like certainty. It may be that by some miracle of grace, man's will joined with God's will, every lost soul will voluntarily turn back to God ultimately. All we would plead for is that the possibility, if not the probability, is the other way.

## III

Of the great family of human souls who pass into death "unsaved" it cannot, however, be said that they have reached any finality of attitude towards right and wrong in this life. Most men when they die are in a thoroughly undeveloped spiritual state. This is obvi-

ously true of all children and of most young people who die before their time, but it may with equal truth be predicted of enormous numbers of people at any and every stage of their earthly life. Many, again, have never had a fair moral chance during their brief and sorrowful sojourn in this life; the very light of conscience that is in them is little better than darkness; laden with congenital disabilities, pent up in narrow and alien circumstances, surrounded by a ghastly environment of perpetual and disabling temptation, denied all opportunities of enlightenment and betterment—are these poor waifs and strays of humanity to be doomed and damned to everlasting perdition because they have never had the advantages of others more fortunate? It is little easement to our solicitude for these our poor brothers and sisters to say of them that they will be "judged according to their light," *for they have had no adequate light at all.* It is to our mind inconceivable that any final judgment whatever should be passed on souls who have been under such disabling moral conditions from birth to death. Many of these under happier circumstances would have risen to their opportunities. Dr. Barnardo once told the writer that of the multitude of waifs and strays rescued by him and passed through the Christian discipline of his Homes—a multitude for the most part drawn from that class of which Robert South long ago said that they had been "not so much *born* as *damned* into the world"—only two per cent. ever found their way in after-life into the grasp of the criminal law, and that the vast majority grew to be clean-living Christian men and women. *So doubtless would multitudes of their less fortunate fellows whom no*

*one has rescued from their evil environment.* Are we to think of these that the chance they never had here will be denied to them also Hereafter? If Divine judgment is passed on such, it will surely only be after the full light of the Gospel of holiness, love, and grace, has shone upon them in another life. Judgment loses its meaning if it does not deal with real moral issues, and these we cannot arrive at till we come to a certain stage of enlightenment. It is before the "judgment-seat of Christ" that all men will have at last to appear, and though those who have known Him here will have to give account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad, those who have not known Him while in the body cannot have that supreme standard applied to them, but must be judged by what they shall know of Him, and by what they will do with His claims, in the life to come.

But even to have heard of Christ is not always to have known Him for what He is—the moral touchstone, as well as the Saviour, of the human soul. There are probably millions of people in this favoured land who have never been brought effectually face to face with His sovereign claims on their allegiance. Yet are they not given over hopelessly to evil; there is often more goodness than badness in them; they have simply not arrived at the spiritual majority. Probably the chaplains at the Front have the best possible chance of seeing deeply into the heart of the young manhood of Britain, facing together as they do day by day the imminent realities of life and death. And their consistent testimony concerning our soldiers is that the vast majority of them (as an Army chaplain recently ex-

pressed it to the writer) "are unsaved, but salvable." These are the men who are dying daily for us in their thousands. "Unsaved but salvable"—that is their condition; yet are they hurried out of life with the consent and on behalf of us all into the other world. Does not the fact that we allow this sacrifice without protest or, indeed, any deep solicitude—unless it be for one here and there of them who is personally near and dear to us—show that we do not really believe that the chances of this life are ended for them at death, but that beyond the grave these souls will be offered the opportunity to complete their earthly probation and come to the great hour of decision that comes to many of us here and now?

## IV

But *what of the finally unrepentant*—if any such remain after all the Divine disciplines and opportunities of betterment that may be accorded to them hereafter? Are they to be doomed—self-doomed, that is—to endless reaping of the evil seed they have sown? Or will they by an inevitable law pass into nonentity? Or will they by a Divine and merciful *fiat* be deprived of the existence whose opportunities they have so flagrantly abused?

Here the curtain descends on all clear spiritual vision. No voice has spoken to us concerning that far and yet —to many of us—urgent question. No clear ray of light has ever lit up the gloom in which the fate of those who, in their unconstrained exercise of the glorious, yet awful, prerogative of freedom, identify them-

selves indissolubly with evil. Reason falters in this dim region of uncertainty and surmise. Nevertheless, in our judgment, we are justified in reverently throwing out a few tentative thoughts.

1. It seems to us no longer possible to hold to the traditional view that there will be an eternity of woe for anyone in a universe created by a God of Holy Love. However self-chosen such a fate, and therefore deserved, it would form an intolerable blot on the final consummation of all things. It used to be taught that part of the blessedness of the redeemed would be to watch the tortures of the damned writhing in eternal fires of torment. That would be to turn Heaven itself into a Hell. We could not speak of those in any true sense as "saved" who could thus delight in the wretchedness of their fellow-creatures. Rather would we say that so long as a single soul remained in the universe unredeemed and unblessed, there could be no perfect Heaven for God or Man.[1]

[1] It is sometimes good to turn away from such travesties of the Christian standpoint to the intuitions of heathen writers, untrammelled by the hard limitations of dogma. There is a picture, for instance, in a Buddhist temple in China representing the story of the priest Lo Puh, who on passing the gate of death saw his mother Yin Teh in Hell. He instantly descended into the infernal court where she was suffering, and by his valour, virtues, and intercessions, rescued her. An old commentary of the Koran says a Mohammedan priest was once asked how the blessed in Paradise could be happy when missing some near relative or friend whom they were forced to believe to be in Hell. He replied, "God will either cause men to forget such persons, or else to rest in expectation of their coming" (Alger's *Doctrine of a Future State*, pp. 569, 570). Our Lord represents Dives in torment agonising over the possible fate of his five brothers who are still on earth. So that seem-

2. On the other hand, there does not seem to be anything in the nature of sin and of its effects on the soul to suggest that it has the power to destroy *existence* as well as *character* and felicity. As already hinted, evil men are still integral personalities, and are often full of a vivid though perverted vitality. The deeper a man sinks under the dominance of wrong-doing, the more powerful his will, the clearer his brain, the more intense his sensibilities often are. Those who argue from the fact that creatures out of harmony with their earthly environment tend to die out, to the inference that souls who have lost spiritual touch with the Divine life must in the end fade into nonentity, are following a one-sided analogy to a false conclusion. It would be just as cogent (and futile) to argue from the fact that parasites, who batten on the juices and tissues of higher organisms, are often more fat and flourishing than their victims, to the conclusion that souls who misuse their privileges, and grow rich on the poverty of better men, win thereby a firmer and surer place in the hierarchy of moral existence. These analogies are irrelevant to the issue. The Apostle speaks of men "abiding" in "death" (1 John iii. 14), as of others "abiding" in "life," where "death" and "life" mean a state of spiritual alienation from, or fellowship with, God. We have no grounds whatever, therefore, for believing that sin will finally destroy its victims in the sense that it will sap the very fountain of their existence.

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ingly even in Hell there may be awakened something like an altruistic spirit! Is there not an authentic ray of hope here even for the lost? Torments thus disciplinary do not strike a note of despair.

3. *Our hope, here, as ever, is in God, not in man.* It is permissible, in other words, to believe, however tremblingly, that He who gave us being in order that we might through His grace "win our souls," and so gain eternal felicity, will not permit any of His creatures to exist for ever in active opposition to His will, and so in misery, but will, when it is clear to His all-seeing eye that the final step has been taken in the identification of any soul with evil, "destroy both body and soul in Hell." Jesus speaks of God as being "able" to do this; and *shall He not do it*, as His last act of mercy on the finally impenitent and unredeemed, if such there be at last who, from hopelessly perverted will, resist the whole appeal of the Divine holiness and love?[1] At best we can but "consider and bow the head" in awe and trepidation at such unspeakable guilt, sure that for such a soul "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31).

## V

We pass to the question, What light does the teaching of Jesus and of His Apostles throw (when shorn of

[1] Jesus' use of the word Gehenna, if founded (as seems clear) on the contemporary uses of the word, suggests that it was the place of final retribution, rather than an intermediate state of purgation. His frequent reference to it ("criticism will not easily negative its claim to belong to the original report of Christ's words"—Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 357) is in keeping with this interpretation in every instance. And in each case, being "cast into Gehenna" refers to an act of God, not the automatic effects of evil on the soul. According to Jesus, it is God, not sin, who in the end "destroys" the wicked.

the Apocalyptic form into which this is so often cast) on the state into which those pass at death who are not thus hopelessly committed to evil ways?

The answer must be frankly this, *There is throughout the New Testament no direct light at all on this problem.* The Gospels and the Epistles have been examined with meticulous care by Universalists and Conditionalists alike for any hint they may contain, but apart from a few texts which a sober exegesis pronounces irrelevant to the case, they have been examined in vain. Professor Salmond shows, we think conclusively, in his chapter on this subject, that Jesus is entirely "silent on the subject of the *Intermediate State*."[1] The same is true of St. Paul,[2] and of the other Apostolic writers.[3] They are all silent about it. But this fact may be interpreted in two ways. Those who build on the assumption that in the New Testament we have God's final revelation on all possible aspects of human destiny are forced to the conclusion that there is no intermediate state of trial or probation for anyone after death. Is this assumption, however, valid? Is it not more reasonable and scientific to say that in this early literature only those aspects of the question are dealt with which were vital to the thought of the time? The living problem of the early Church was the attitude of those on whom the full light of the Gospel shone, and their ultimate fate in view of their acceptance or rejection of its claims. Nowhere, either in the teaching of Jesus or of His Apostles, is the fate of those dealt with who had never heard of the Gospel, or to whom it had not been

[1] *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 339 *et seq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 521 *et seq.* [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 415 *et seq.*

effectively preached. This problem, so vital to us in these days, had not then, nor for long afterwards, become a matter of urgent solicitude. This seems passing strange to us; none the less it was clearly so. "The burden of Scripture"—as Dr. Newman Smyth writes—"is the utter urgency of a right moral decision now before the Cross, and it holds up no promise hereafter to any man who now determines himself against the Spirit of Christ." But he goes on to say that there are "parts of the doctrine of the future" which "are left in obscurity," and suggests that "we have a moral right —a right guaranteed by these Scriptures—to take refuge from the perplexities of the final issues of evil in our own ignorance and the silence of Scripture: to find peace, comfort, and hope in the merciful obscurities of revelation."[1] We venture to think that more than this is legitimate. *We have a moral right to consider all fresh problems that arise in view of the essential revelation of God in Christ.* Even though nothing is said on many questions in the fragmentary records of that revelation, it is the duty of the Christian thinker, under due limitations of modesty and reverence, to suggest such answers to all living problems as seem legitimate in the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And an intermediate state of probation and education for all unripe and undeveloped souls seems to us a necessary corollary of that Gospel which reveals His boundless love for men, and His universal Saviourhood on their behalf.

[1] *The Orthodox Theology of To-day*, pp. 115, 116, 125, 126 (quoted in Salmond's *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 521, 522).

What are the conditions under which this will take place, we know not. The curtain of ignorance that hangs between us and the details of the other life is impenetrable. Nor is it needful for any of the moral ends of our earthly life that we should know them. The sources of faith are the safeguards of faith. If God provides the necessary conditions of an adequate probation in the world to come for those of His children who have not come to an adequate knowledge of Him here, or who have not finally rejected Him here, we may be well content to leave them in His hands.

## VI

The objection that is constantly being raised against such a theory of future probation as we have ventured to expound and defend is that it revives, in another form, the doctrine of Purgatory which was so summarily jettisoned by all Protestant Churches at the Reformation. Such a charge implies two assumptions. In the first place it makes the authority of the Protestant Reformers final for all succeeding ages; and in the second place it suggests that our theory of probation and the Roman doctrine of Purgatory are practically identical.

1. The notion that Divine authority belongs to the theological finding of the Reformers is one that cannot be tolerated any longer. These men found themselves face to face with a belief in a form of future probation so firmly interwoven with mischievous superstitious accretions, that all they could do was to throw over the whole scheme of eschatology with which these were associated.

It was the system of indulgences which had really roused Luther's righteous wrath—a system invented in the interests of a corrupt and greedy hierarchy,[1] by means of which for their own purposes they played with equal success on the most selfish and the most generous instincts of the human soul: on the one hand encouraging wicked men to believe that they could escape the consequences of present sin by bequests for masses that would ameliorate their future punishment, and cajoling loving hearts, solicitous for their unsaved dead, to spend vast sums in the hope of shortening their stay in purgatorial fires, on the other.[2] By denying the whole doctrine of Purgatory the Reformers succeeded in finally breaking down the influence of this immoral and degrading belief. Having done so, it is time to ask whether in their zeal for the truth they did not unconsciously sacrifice a part of the truth itself. Further, such an attitude towards the Reformers, if carried out consistently, would have made all subsequent developments in theological doctrine impossible, and bound Christian thought for ever in an icy barrier. We have not found any difficulty in breaking away from their views in other directions, as witness later developments of doctrine in relation to the Church, the Sacraments, the Incarnation, the Atonement, in dealing with which we have freely used the contributions of Roman theo-

[1] There is an old proverb which crystallises the situation at the Reformation into a sentence, "The fire of Purgatory boils the monk's saucepan."

[2] "The well-paid priest had the power of sending more quickly to Paradise any deceased person whose salvation might be somewhat doubtful to those left behind" (Petavel, *The Problem of Immortality*, p. 253).

logians. Why should the eschatology of the Reformers alone remain sacrosanct from revision? It would perhaps surprise some of those who take up this point of view to find how far in other directions they have departed from the theology of the sixteenth century. The whimsicalities of the orthodox mind are sometimes hard to beat.

2. But the simple formulation of a self-restrained, and (we believe) evangelical doctrine of future probation is in no sense a return to the Roman doctrine of Purgatory. We advocate no system of indulgences or of masses for the dead. There is no thought of softening the moral issues of this life for anyone on the ground that conscious living in sin may be safely indulged in. On the other hand, we would give full force to the stern and terrible warnings so frequently heard on the lips of Jesus to those who dally with the brief and fleeting opportunities of this life in the poor hope that it will be possible afterwards to reverse their deliberate rejection of His claims on them here. We have no soft words for such traffickers with the grace of God. Their doom is clearly announced by the gentlest yet most remorseless lips that ever spake of mercy and judgment. The chances of future probation we would plead for are not for these, but for those who are as yet unawakened through no inherent fault of their own to the meaning of life and of religion, or who have never had these presented to them. The case of these is not dealt with in the sacred pages. It can only be envisaged in the light of the deep essential implications of the Gospel of Divine love.

## VII

There is a question still remaining which is of vital and living interest to multitudes of anxious believers. Are we justified in offering up prayers for the dead who never made the great decision in this life? And even for those who did so?

This custom, reaching far back into the Christian centuries, was undoubtedly the germ out of which developed the system of indulgences which Protestant thought has finally condemned as unscriptural and mischievous. It is, however, in no way organic to that custom. The free impulse of loving faith to pursue her vanished dead into the unseen world with the heart's goodwill and solicitude and prayers that they may be reinforced in their search for God, and find that salvation there which they may have missed here, is one thing; the traffic in magical rites and formal priestly prayers on their behalf is quite another. The evangelical conception of prayer is that of a spontaneous, earnest, profoundly personal outgoing of the soul in petition to God for a desired good; it is something that can be shared, but not delegated; and he who joins with another in this high exercise must be as spontaneous and earnest and personal as his comrade in the privilege. With the New Testament in our hand, we can never return to the Roman doctrine of Indulgences!

On the other hand, it must be freely allowed that there is no shadow or hint of such a custom in the Primitive Church, so far as its thought and life are mirrored in the New Testament. Judging by the re-

cords, we should infer that such a thought had nowhere suggested itself to any of the writers, nor to those whose words or habits of thought they record. Even those who base their faith in such prayers on passages like Ephesians iii. 15 ("For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth* is named," etc.), are importing into their interpretation a subjective element which a sober exegesis must disallow. We must put down the silence of Scriptural writers on this matter to the same reason as their silence on the question of future probation—the problem had not as yet suggested itself to them, absorbed as they were in more pressing and imperative problems of their own. And for the same reason this silence must not be considered a barrier to the heart's impulses to deal quite freely with the question, now that it has arisen and become living and urgent for Christian believers.

Granted the position taken up in this book, there can be no reason whatever for denying the validity of prayers for the dead. Why, if intercourse for our loved ones is often effectual while they are on this side of the narrow line that divides the living from the dead, should we doubt its power on their behalf when removed beyond that line? *Only if their final destiny is sealed at death.* If, on the other hand, they are still capable of moral change there, then may we not send forth all the helpfulness of our prayers for them into the Unseen, where God reigns and loves and energises for their salvation, as He does here? True, we scarcely know how to pray or what to pray for on their behalf. Many will, for this reason, find it impossible to formulate any detailed

petition for them, or prefer to leave them wholly in the hands of their Maker and Redeemer. To many others this is growingly becoming a more and more difficult position. "The heart has reasons which the reason cannot understand," as Pascal profoundly said in another connection. Love, reinforced by faith, can overleap many a barrier which neither love nor faith can surmount alone; and this may well be one.

During the long and weary months of this War thousands of devout fathers and mothers, wives, sisters, lovers, in all lands, have been besieging the throne of heavenly grace with passionate prayers for the safety and spiritual welfare of their dear ones at the Front. No one can put a limit to the prevailing influence of such prayers, nor what they mean for those on whose behalf they may rise as a sweet incense into the Unseen. *Many such prayers have continued long after many a lad whose fate is unknown has passed into the Unseen.* Have these prayers been useless and in vain? Do only those count that were offered before the hour and article of death? If so, then indeed the question is closed. But who, save those who are hedged in by doctrinaire presuppositions of the finality of death, would venture on such a statement? And if not, why should not those prayers be continued in faith that, in some unknown way, they form a link between us and those who are for the time lost to sense, but who may still be united to us by the secret benefits of loving supplications? Let those who feel thus follow their heart's instinct in trustful faith, whatever others may say. Nor can we pass judgment on those whose traditions and upbringing are too stubborn to enable them to break

away. In this region of delicate feeling and shadowy intuition, we cannot lay down any rules or regulations for common guidance: all must follow the light within, in the secret place where the soul has its most intimate fellowship with the Father of Lights, who is also Lord of Death and the giver of immortality.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE HEAVENLY STATE

"I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore
Are glorified, or, if they sleep, shall wake
From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.
Hope, below this, consists not with belief
In mercy, carried infinite degrees
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts.
Hope, below this, consists not with belief
In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,
That finds no limit but its own pure will."

WORDSWORTH: *Excursion*, Book IV.

"And tho' we wear out life, alas!
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we may not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find—

"Yet shall we one day gain, life past,
Clear vision o'er our Being's whole,
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul."

M. ARNOLD.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HEAVENLY STATE

"The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
And the man said, 'Am I your debtor?'
And the Lord, 'Not yet; but make it as clean as you can,
And I will lend you a better.'"

SO far our investigations into the problem of human destiny beyond the grave have been marked by some hesitancy. Our affirmations have been tinged with uncertainty, our negations have been more or less dubious. For we were moving in a land of mists and shadows, where no clear light shines, and where no seer's foot has ever fallen firm and confident. That was because so far we had not touched the core and marrow of the Christian doctrine of Immortality, which is not a doctrine of mere survival, nor of mere judgment, still less of retribution and doom, but a clear and glorious Promise, God's *Yea* and *Amen* to the high aspirations of the climbing soul of man. The conception of immortality brought to light in the Gospel is the assurance that for all whose hearts are set on the ideal fully realised in Jesus there is no death, but such a reinforcement, and enrichment, and intensity of life beyond the grave as no language can describe, no imagination picture forth. This was the secret of Jesus, "the mys-

tery hidden from ages and from generations, but now made manifest to His saints" (Col. i. 26, 27); this was the "hope of glory," begun in foretaste here, fully to be revealed hereafter in the heavenly state; this was the reward reserved for them "who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, even eternal life" (Rom. ii. 7). Not mere continuance of such a life, even at its best, as we now enjoy; but a full realisation of what comes to us here only in inspired moments, in ecstatic foreshadowings, in dreams and visions of the soul. That is what the Gospel was to Paul, and John and Peter, and that glad circle of believers who were gathered into the first Christian Church. The Resurrection Life of Jesus was the morning-star of this glorious day. This it was that set the seal on His promise, that where He was they should be also, and filled them all with such confidence that the best of them could say exultingly of his most poignant sorrows and sufferings that his "light affliction, which was but for a moment, worked for him a far more exceeding weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17) and made him long to be "with Christ," which was "far better." The Christian Gospel means many things; at its last and its best, it means *Heaven for the redeemed.*

I

Alas! what has become of this assurance of the early Church, and of all great ages of the later Church, that it has receded so far and become so dim to us all?

It is strange, but true, that the Christian Church has realised only at rare intervals in its long history the

splendour of this vision, and has lived under its inspiration only by fits and starts. A few gifted and saintly souls have done so habitually, moving among their fellows as strangers and pilgrims, a little "colony of heaven" on earth,[1] because they had heaven in their hearts; and for a time they have infected others with their unworldly temper. But for the most part, and sometimes for long ages, the Church has almost forgotten its celestial destiny; has lived more in fear of Hell than in hope of Heaven; has laid up treasures on earth, when it ought to be enjoying in foretaste its inheritance above; has even made unholy compact with the pomps and powers of this lower world, as though its title to the skies were null and void. Stranger still, the ages of "otherworldliness" in the Church have always been ages of cleansing and progress for this world; the ages of its worldliness have been ages when this life has fallen into corruption and misery; as though to show that it is Heaven alone that unfolds the true values of earth, and that life here is only really worth living to those who treat it as preface and exordium to a Better!

There has been no period since that of the Apostles when the prospect and promise of the Heavenly Life has been so dimly felt, so uncertainly trusted by the whole Church, as during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth. This present world has been rediscovered as the home of man during this wonderful time. Man has suddenly come to his earthly sovereignty; Nature has unfolded her secrets to him, has placed her forces at his disposal, has

[1] Phil. iii. 20 (Moffatt's translation).

scattered her wealth at his feet; at long last, he has "come to his own." Dazed at the accession of power in his hands, intoxicated by the opportunities of sensuous satisfaction at his lips, he has drunk deep of draughts of this lower life, has conquered time and space, and has realised that it is possible to put centuries of experience into the brief span of his earthly existence. True, he has not really stretched that span beyond the allotted time, though he has begun to prate of a possible earthly immortality—of a kind—even for the individual.[1] And so the Heaven beyond the grave has faded into the far distance, and even good men confess that its golden promise has next to no place in their hierarchy of motives to true living. And what has been the result? A civilisation in ruins; a war that is devastating a Continent, and threatening to overwhelm the race in an orgy of suicidal strife! *For it is precisely the nation which has most thoroughly repudiated the Christian creed, has glorified the natural life as opposed to the spiritual, and has exalted earthly as distinguished from heavenly realities, that has plunged the world into this tragic and futile struggle. This war is the Nemesis of worldliness.*

It is therefore time that the Church of Christ hunted up its forgotten title-deeds, and revised its contract with the world that now is; else there is small hope for either Church or world in the age before us. *For the hope of every generation lies in the unworldly souls that leaven it with their high temper and their holy idealisms.*

[1] See Metchnikoff's works.

## II

It is here pertinent to recur to a question already dealt with at some length in an earlier chapter.[1] Why has the life to come so largely lost its place as a source of religious inspiration and moral betterment? In addition to the more general reason there unfolded, there is one other, which, in our judgment, accounts for not a little of the vagueness and helplessness of our present-day view of the future life. *This is the prevailing conception of it as a disembodied state.* Most of us no longer accept that pregnant line in the ancient creeds, "*I believe in the Resurrection of the Body.*" Finding it impossible to retain the traditional view of this tenet, which, indeed, had become quite incredible in the materialistic form it had taken in the "orthodox" mind of the last few generations, and forgetting that this was a degenerate type of thought, totally out of keeping with the faith as expounded by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. ("flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"), we have fallen into the obvious fallacy of imagining the only alternative to be total disbelief. It is time this subject were thoroughly overhauled. We can here and now do little more than throw out a few suggestions.

There can be no manner of doubt that the central difference between the later Jewish conception of immortality, as distinguished from, say, the Grecian, was its strong affirmation of the resurrection of the body. To the latter the great sorrow and tragedy of death was the fact that it meant the permanent separation of body

[1] See Part I., Chap. I.

and soul. The world of the dead was the world of "shades," of disembodied spirits, condemned for ever to a futile and ineffectual existence, because they were for ever divorced from the body that gave life its fulness, its joy, its effectiveness. To the Greek, the real man is the man of flesh and blood, partaker of the tangible existence of earth, and what subsists in the hereafter is only an attenuated edition of the man."[1] We have found that all ancient peoples had this fundamental conception—the Hebrews, no less than the Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Roman. Thus, mere survival of physical death was not considered a boon by any of them. The Hebrew alone, with his loftier and purer conception of God, had the courage and faith to solve this dark riddle of destiny by boldly affirming for the righteous the reuniting (through the power of God) of body and soul at a future resurrection, thus opening up a prospect of re-entering into "fulness of life." This bold step, as we have seen, was taken by the Apocalyptic writers, and inherited by the contemporaries of Jesus. But what to them was a matter of hope and tentative faith suddenly became a glorious certainty to the Christian Church. This transformation of the traditional belief was effectuated by the reappearance of Jesus from the dead, not as a disembodied spirit, but as an embodied personality—His Very Self and His Whole Self—integral, recognisable, complete. Whatever we to-day may think of that supreme event in history, and whatever difficulties we may find in the bodily aspect

[1] Salmond's *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 124. See the whole chapter on "Greek Beliefs," which fully illustrates the position taken up in the text.

of the resurrection of Jesus, there can be no manner of doubt that those who saw and communed with the Risen Lord were absolutely persuaded of this. They believed in the Empty Grave; they believed that in some mysterious way His earthly body, transfigured into its spiritual equivalent, was an integral part of the great fact. And it was this that gave them their new, joyful, exhilarating conception of a resurrection life for themselves. It filled them on one side with a sense of difficulty and bafflement.[1] It filled them on the other with a sense of triumph—that at last the great enemy of the race had been conquered, and that death, the grim separator of body and soul, was "swallowed up" in victory. Compare St. Paul: "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. iv. 16, v. 1). And St. John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). Till quite recently the Christian Church in all its branches accepted this solution of the dark riddle of the grave. It held that there would be a general resurrection at which body and soul would be reunited in a mysterious but real sense, and the loss of this belief has greatly shaken and impoverished the hope of believers in a glorious immortality.

[1] The classic passage in 1 Cor. xv. 35 proves this.

## III

For what clear conception can we have of a spiritual existence that is disembodied? The power of abstraction has done wonderful things for human thought; what it can never do is to enable us to realise the survival of a concrete personality as a "disembodied" ghost. How true this is may be seen if we carefully consider the functions performed by the body in this life as the medium of expression for the soul. What function does our body fulfil for us?

In the first place, the body enables us to realise our *self-identity*. It is the organ whereby we distinguish between our essential ego and our physical environment. By means of it, we move about and so are able to distinguish between our integral self and the objects or persons who surround us. We see, we hear, we feel by means of our sense organs, and what we see and feel and hear is realised to be something other than ourselves. It is by the action and reaction of the embodied spirit and its environment that the child comes to distinguish itself from its surroundings and from other persons. It takes a year or two of constant movement to come to any effective sense of its self-identity, and many more to complete the process; nor can we conceive of any means or method whereby we can maintain full self-consciousness except through the medium of an organism separable from its physical and social environment.

Secondly, the body is the *instrument whereby the soul is enabled to act effectively on its environment*. Our feet give us the power of movement, our hands the power of manipulating our surroundings to our purposes.

The loss or mutilation of the limbs, by cramping our physical effectiveness, is always felt to be a supreme calamity, because it renders us physically so helpless, so dependent on others more fortunate. By means of tools, man's power over the environment is enormously increased; but *every kind of tool is but an extension* of the hand or foot, or other bodily organ, and all are useless unless the living and embodied person is there to direct their operations.

Thirdly, *all possibility of mutual recognition and of communication between one person and another is dependent on the body.* By physical presence and gesture, by voice and language, we share our individual life with others, know each other, and so become members of society. This can only be done to full satisfaction by personal (*i.e.*, bodily) presence; the further we are physically removed from one another, the fainter and less real does this social intercourse become. In primitive times all communication between one person and another ceased when separated by distance, except through messages carried by a third person. A great extension of social intercourse took place with the invention of written speech, which enabled men to continue sharing in the thoughts of absent or dead persons—a process still more widely extended through the invention of printing. In recent times the social life of humanity has been immeasurably enriched by such mechanical contrivances as the telegraph (static and wireless), telephone, phonograph, and moving picture. Nor have we probably come to the end of these fresh instrumentalities of intercourse. Ever and always, however, in the last resort, there are two or more embodied per-

sons in communication with each other, the mechanical means of communication being but extensions of their organs of mutual intercourse. But all mutual intercourse ceases at death, which, by destroying the body as the soul's instrument, makes psychic communication between one person and another no longer possible.

It is the sense that body and soul were separated finally at death which, as we have seen, rendered the future life so painful to the ancients, and made them dread profoundly the passage into the unseen world. True, their conception of the soul as a shadowy and attenuated facsimile of the body, enabled them to believe in a kind of continued self-identity of the soul in Sheol or Tartarus,[1] and in the possibility of its recognition by others; but they were all convinced of the helplessness and ineffectiveness of the soul's post-mortem existence. It was, on the other hand, the conception of a future life as an embodied state in which the "naked" soul was "clothed upon" by a spiritual body,[2] like that of Jesus, "who shall change our mortal body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the

[1] Homer thus shows Ulysses, and Virgil shows Aeneas, upon their entrance into the other world, mutually recognising their old comrades, and recognised by them:

> "Thus side by side along the dreary coast
> Advanced Achilles and Patroclus' ghost—
> A friendly pair."

Compare the story of the witch of Endor in 1 Sam. xxviii. 7-14 (especially verse 14) and the vision of the monarch shades in the underworld pictured by Isaiah as recognising the shades of the Kings of Babylon, and rising from their thrones to greet him with mockery—"Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" (Isa. xiv. 10).

[2] *Cf.* 1 Cor. xv. 36-38, 42-44, with 2 Cor. v. 1.

working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 21), which permanently changed the conception of death from a dreadful prospect into a keen expectation for the Christian Church in all ages down to our own. We can thus understand how the modern attempt to conceive of the future life as a disembodied state (of which the simple person cannot by any stretch of imagination for any real conception, and which the most cultured minds only seem to be able to do by an exaggerated effort of abstraction) largely accounts for the present-day loss of interest in the life to come. We may attenuate our conception of spiritual existence as far as we please, it will always retain a dim relic of corporeality, for we have no experience whatever of any type of human existence that is not associated with form, and form implies "outlined content" of some kind.

Nor is the idea of a "spiritual" body either materialistic or unscientific, as John Fiske has affirmed.[1] Speak-

[1] Dr. McConnell meets John Fiske's criticism of such an hypothesis as being "materialistic in character" with the statement: "This, I conceive, is precisely where its strength resides. It moves away from that phantasmal region of 'disembodied ghosts' and looks for the hope of continued existence at the top of the hill, but on the line of the same path up which life has been climbing throughout the aeons" (*Evolution of Immortality*, pp. 171, 172). From another and more distinctively religious point of view Professor Mackintosh writes thus: "The Christian mind has never been really cordial about a bare dogma of immortality of the soul. It has felt that personal life can be re-established on the further side only as spirit is invested by God's gift with a perfect organism. . . . . We imply body indeed when we speak of an immortal soul, for spirit is defined as soul only in relation to a body. One main reason of opposition to this in philosophic circles is

ing purely from the scientific point of view, Professor Cope, in his *Origin of the Fittest*, in reply to the question, "Is there any generalised form of matter distributed through the Universe which could sustain consciousness?" says: "The presumption is that such a form of matter does exist." Our present organism is conditioned by its earthly environment. The living principle has used the material ready to its hand, and has used it freely in all its forms. Our bones are *solid;* our brains, glands, and nervous tissues are *semi-fluid;* our blood and other juices are *fluid;* our breath is *gaseous;* and there are other still more tenuous forms of "matter" used up in the chemical, magnetic, and electrical energies that are resident within, or are constantly flowing in and out of, our physical frames. Life has laid these physical forces all under contribution in the interests of soul, with a freedom and skill that are marvellous. Under different conditions we may well believe that the unique life-principle which animates our bodies would shape its organism differently. If, for instance, there are living beings in the planet of Jupiter or in Sirius, they must have bodies entirely gaseous in texture; if on the moon, which has no air or water, they must be entirely solid; nor is there any logical reason for denying that such creatures may actually exist.[1]

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obviously the underlying prejudice that body as such—not simply matter—is a debasing burden or limitation. But we may reasonably think of it as a principle of individuality as well as a serviceable medium of spiritual commerce, in the absence of which souls 'unclothed upon' would share no life but their own" (*Immortality and the Future*, p. 166).

[1] This in opposition to Alfred Russel Wallace's theory to the contrary. See *Man's Place in the Universe.*

And in the spirit world it is quite conceivable that the ether, of which all the cruder forms of matter are built up, may provide a body for the soul of infinite tenuity, but of perfect adaptability for the purpose.[1] We have already been able to use the etheric vibrations for the extension of our physical senses to a distance in telegraphy and telephony. It is thus puerile to suggest that what we can imperfectly do even in this life, through our clumsy (though very marvellous) mechanical contrivances, is impossible for re-embodied souls under the finer conditions of spiritual existence in the unseen world.

Is it idle to suggest that even in this life, if the soul were fully spiritualised, it would have the power of transforming our present bodies into something finer and more perfectly adaptable to its ends? Is the Biblical view that sin has interfered with the natural sovereignty of soul over body, and that even physical death is not so much an essential element of human experience as a *falling back under the dominance of a law which in a sinless world might have been transcended*, a purely

[1] *Cf.* Browning on the possible development in another life of such a soul as Michael Angelo's :

> " If such his soul's capacities,
> Even while he trod on earth—think, now,
> What pomp in Buonarotti's brow,
> *With its new palace brain where dwells*
> *Superb the soul, unvexed by cells*
> *That crumbled with the transient clay!*
> What visions will his right hand's sway
> Still turn to forms, as still they burst
> Upon him? How will he quench thirst
> Titanically infantine,
> Laid at the breast of the Divine?"
>
> *Easter Day*

fanciful conception?[1] This notion has haunted the mind of men from earliest times (*cf.* legend of Enoch); it is certainly strongly suggested in Paul's writings; and the conception of Jesus, the sinless one, having passed through death, not in His own right, but as a free gift for others' redemption, and of His uprising from the dead in His own right ("Death could not hold Him"—Acts ii. 24; Moffatt's translation), bears out the idea. It has been ruled out by modern science, which only takes note of the factual; and modern theology has largely followed science here, possibly betraying her cause through an obsession. Doubtless "death is inherent in human organisms, such as we now know them," to quote Professor Davidson;[2] "but that fact can support no inference as to how death or disease would be-

[1] *Cf.* Prof. A. B. Davidson's *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 516: "Man is not considered in Scripture as a duality, but as a Unity, composed of elements; and the principle of this Unity, the centre of it, is his moral relation to God. This binds all his parts into one, and retains his constitution entire as he came from God. The narrative beginning with chapter ii. of Genesis places man as there created before us in true relations to God, and living; it describes how God called to man's consciousness these relations, concentrating them into a particular point, and how He set before him death as the penalty of any change in these relations—'Thou shalt not eat; in the day thou eatest thereof thou *diest*.' He ate and died. This was the penalty attached to eating of the tree. In the day man ate he died. He became mortal, in the sense that he must die. Death laid his hand upon him, and called him his own from that moment. From that moment he was dead in sin—dead, as the consequence of sin. He can be called dead in the language of Paul, who says of men who still lived, 'The body indeed is dead, because of sin.' A parable; but who can tell whether it does not enshrine a truth?"

[2] *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 434.

have in the presence of a perfectly moral condition, and what would occur in the organism of such a being; for the difference between the *highest morality that exists*, and *a perfect one*, is a difference not in degree but in kind. . . . Scripture expressly recognises the two conditions of a perfect and an imperfect moral state, and teaches that the organism of human nature is not a thing under the governance of physical laws only, but is lifted up by the *spiritual nature of man into another plane, and subject in its destiny to the operations of moral laws.*" Be this as it may, the New Testament represents the Resurrection of Jesus as on the one side a reward for His perfect obedience (Phil. ii. 8, 9), and, on the other, as a guarantee that through Him death was finally conquered, and that His own people were to share in that supernal victory, not in the mere sense of survival, but of survival in a re-embodied sovereign fulness of life.

Further, is it fanciful to suggest that in this life of probation and moral experience a process is going on in the inner life whereby the soul is even now assimilating itself with its spiritual environment, and shaping its spiritual body in accordance with the character and intensity of its spiritual activities? Or, may we not hazard the conjecture that God is preparing for us a body "as it shall please Him," which will be the exact counterpart of the soul, the appropriate expression of its essential quality, and which awaits us in the Unseen? May it not be part of the reward of the virtuous, and of the judgment of the vicious, that we are all thus unconsciously determining in the present life the organic environment which awaits us in the after-life? Even

the present intractable body is more or less plastic under the shaping influence of the inhabiting soul. As we grow older, character puts its stamp more and more legibly on our bodily frame, and especially on our facial expression. Love and purity irradiate the commonest countenances, lust and anger and spleen tend to debase the handsomest features. With the finer and more obedient form of "matter" with which the soul will probably be associated in the life to come, this *rapport* between the spirit and its organism may well become closer and more perfect, so that through all veils of humility and hypocrisy the inner self will be revealed in its essential quality, and be aided or hampered by its organism, which will become more and more its willing servant, or its tyrannous master, according as we here come to sure self-governance or descend to lawless indulgence of the lower passions. If any reader demurs to this suggestion as too speculative, we would at least ask him to consider whether it is not legitimate speculation, in line with the process of assimilation that goes on everywhere between organism and function, and that it is consistent also with the deep intuitions of our Faith?

## IV

We are now in a position to deal more adequately with the New Testament conception of the heavenly state of the blessed dead.

1. *It is an embodied state.* Those who have died in the Lord are no mere phantasmal existences; they are not "pure spirit" divorced from all relation to the great world of matter, which in this life gives the soul its

organism and its opportunity; they are not disembodied ghosts, wandering in the void. Such a conception is fit only for those ages which associated matter with the evil principle, as something alien from God and resistant to His will. Matter is a part of God's own Universe, and even here its highest function is to be the servant of spirit. It is God's "self-expression in objectivity"; it is the condition of the realisation of our own subjective-objective life; it is our medium of communication, recognition, and fellowship with other souls; it is the avenue in which the soul becomes effective for power, influence, and creative energy. Why should we rule out all relation in the after-life to that great, glorious, orderly, progressive *half of reality*, without which we could have no consciousness, no individuality, no progress in knowledge, no power, no sense of sovereignty? It is not that we may be separated from the material universe in the spirit world that we pass through the gate of death, but that we may come into more intimate and perfect relations with it; that we may be released, if we live well here, from its limitations, raised above its tyranny, made free of its abundant and (in this life) scarcely suspected beauty and potency. We cannot here forecast the precise nature of the new relation to it which is possible to "just men made perfect"; but we may be sure that it will be something which will no longer hinder the full entrance of the soul on its use and control of the material order for spiritual ends. "Here in the body pent" we blunder and plunge darkly, in blindness and ignorance, amid the dimly known laws of matter and spirit; there we shall find ourselves in a "new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," and love,

and power. What fresh secrets of knowledge and power we shall master at once, and what others we shall gain only after long ages of earnest inquiry into the hidden mystery of the Universe, we know not. We may rest assured that what science feebly gropes after in this world will come to us in the other full-orbed and splendid; what philosophy fails to master here will there unfold into light; what religion now staggers after, in a vain attempt to grasp and hold, will there at last come into our full possession. "Here we know in part and we prophesy (speculate, intuitionise, foresee) in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see in a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; *but then shall I know as I am known*" (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12).

2. *It is a state of recognition and fellowship with other embodied souls.* The question perpetually rises to our lips, "Shall we know our loved ones in heaven?" This trouble is the fruit of the "disembodied" notion of the future life; it could scarcely suggest itself to those who believed in the "spiritual body." The scriptural conception of the future life is securely based on the belief in the continuance of personality in all its distinctiveness beyond the grave, in its recognisability, and in its capacity for fellowship with kindred souls. This is not so much taught as assumed to be self-evident. "If it were not so, I would have told you." In the references to "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"; in the reappearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration; in the parable of Dives and Lazarus; in our Lord's sayings, "I go to prepare a place for you, that

where I am ye may be also"; "their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven"; "there is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth"; and many others, it is implied beyond question. When Heaven is opened before the dying Stephen, he is represented as seeing and instantly knowing his Divine Master; and Paul bids the Thessalonians not "sorrow concerning them that are asleep, as those who have no hope," clearly suggesting that they shall meet and know each other again. The brilliant and impressive pictures of the heavenly life that teem in the Book of Revelation all carry home the same idea. Heaven is not a state of isolated individualism, lost in an impenetrable and lonely secrecy; it is a *society*, with free, joyous, happy intercourse between all who are in spiritual affinity. It is a commonwealth, a city, a church, a kingdom—all social conceptions. "But ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus" (Heb. xii. 18-24). This is the prospect to which all the New Testament writers, filled with the contagious spiritual insight of their Master, looked forward with intense expectancy beyond the dark river of death. It was the radiant cloud on Time's far horizon into which prophecy and Apocalyptic melted, the "consummation devoutly to be wished,"

which filled them with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." For those who knew Jesus there were no dark terrors hanging over the grave, but a light reflected from His face, in which all terror vanished, as the thunder-cloud dies at the touch of the returning sun.

And though we may freely and finally renounce the Apocalyptic forms and images in which the forecast of the heavenly state is clothed in Scripture, there is no reason why we should grow doubtful of the validity of our Hope, or even refrain from expressing it in an Apocalyptic of our own. The Apocalyptic of the Hebrew has many elements uncongenial to the modern mind, which lives in a different circle of thought and has interests distinctive to itself. "Streets of gold," and "walls of jasper," and "gates of pearl," and such naïve and childlike images, convey nothing to us to-day. Nevertheless the fundamental idea of the old Apocalyptic is one that is grandly human, and strikes vital roots into the thinking of our own time. The dream of a regenerated society in which the broken, limited, and baffled relationships of earth are renewed, transfigured, and carried up to their highest possibilities in an ideal world, has haunted the human soul from the time of Plato onwards. The Utopias of philosophers, philanthropists, and reformers in all generations—what are these but a part of the great Apocalyptic literature of the world, all negligible as to their form—which is but the reflection of the social aspirations of particular ages and epochs of thought—but all essentially true in their motive, intention, and insight into the *possible* which some day shall become the *real?* What are these noble thinkers, with their passionate longing after moral order

and progress, their profound love for righteousness, their stubborn faith in progress, but the vanguard of that heavenly host of which Faber sings in that finest of all Apocalyptic hymns:

"Hark, hark, my soul! Angelic songs are swelling
O'er earth's green fields and ocean's wave-beat shore,
How sweet the truth those blessed strains are telling,
Of that new life when sin shall be no more.
Angels of Jesus,
Angels of Light,
Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night?"

3. The heavenly state *will thus be a life of progressively perfected ethical and spiritual relationships.*

This is implied by the social character of that life. This was clearly grasped even in prophetic and especially in Apocalyptic times. In the Messianic Kingdom, amid all the varieties of conception through which it passed, "two factors, and only two, were indispensable to its realisation. First, it must be a *community* of Israelites, or of these together with non-Israelites. Secondly, it must be a community *in which God's will is fulfilled.* If we lose sight of either factor, our view of the Kingdom is untrue."[1] Throughout the Bible, as we have seen, there is no hint of a merely individualistic salvation; it is always a boon that can only be fully realised in a fully ethicised society. With Jesus, to enter into life and to enter into the Kingdom are synonymous.[2] We may add a third factor which is implied in the other two. It will be an ethicised society which has *left sin with all its individual disabilities and social dis-*

[1] Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 83.

[2] See Part II., Chap. II., pp. 25, 28.

*turbances behind.* Heaven will not be "earth over again"—with evil, therefore with conflict, therefore with possible defeat, awaiting us there as here. "Such a conception is wholly inadequate to the premonitions of Christian faith."[1] Even here the Apostle refers to a state in which the soul can be spoken of as "dead to sin" (Rom. vi. 11), and if this in the absolute sense is proleptic in its reference, it can only be in reference to the condition of the redeemed in Heaven, who are to be made "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." *If we cannot look forward to a Heaven without sin, there is no Heaven to look forward to.*[2]

But sinlessness is one thing and perfection another; and perfection is not necessarily attained at death. Nor is spiritual perfection itself a static conception, to be attained at a single step, and then possessed eternally. We can conceive of a sinless society which is very imperfect, and in which neither the individual nor the community have more than tasted of the sublime and endless possibilities waiting to be revealed and realised. Indeed, we may say that not till both the individual

[1] See on this point the penetrating and profoundly Christian treatment of Professor Mackintosh, *Immortality and the Future Life*, pp. 154-157.

[2] "The most formidable objection to older views on this point has reference to the notion of sanctification as completed at a stroke, but the point is, I think, fairly met by a further argument. On any theory which does not hold that sin in the redeemed is everlasting, it is difficult to see how sudden and cataclysmic moral transformation *somewhere* can be avoided. Let the soul retain sinful tendencies in the new life, and even there nothing better is in store for it than a *regressus in infinitum*. . . . Sinlessness at death, in other words, is unquestionably a difficulty for thought, but the difficulty of sinfulness after death, is, on the whole, much greater" (*ibid.*, p. 156).

and the social environment in which he lives have done with sin can these implicit moral possibilities begin to realise themselves in any effective sense. Sin is a retarding and disabling force, hindering the flight of the soul towards its ideal life; only when it is shed and left behind does that flight properly begin. This conception of the heavenly life as a state in which at last the individual and the community are free to unfold their latent perfections is one that meets a profound passion in the soul for an ever-growing and ever-perfecting social life. It lends a quickening plot-interest to the prospect of immortality, and inspires an expectancy as to what victories and attainments await us beyond the grave which is in keeping with all that is best in us here. And it is in line with all we know of God's method in Nature, Providence, and Grace.

4. May we not venture one step further here, and suggest with confidence that the Heavenly State is one in which the *highest energies of the redeemed community will be directed towards the salvation of the unredeemed?*

This will not appeal to those who still hold the doctrine that death ends all probation, and automatically fixes the destiny of all mankind. But to all who accept the position developed in this book it must make a strong and vital appeal. For if the vast majority of men and women pass into death in a totally unripe and unprepared—but not finally hopelessly unrepentant—condition, can we conceive it of those who have mastered the secret of Jesus, and been enfolded in the embrace of His justifying and sanctifying grace, that they will be content to leave their less fortunate and less developed brothers

and sisters to wander in helplessness and darkness, without ministering to their needs in a spirit of unbounded love and service? So, surely, would they be "none of His" whose life was given on the Cross for man's redemption, and who, according to all we know of Him, must spend Himself to all eternity in saving energy on behalf of the wandering and the lost. If missionary enthusiasm is the surest touchstone of the Christian temper on earth, and in the after-life there be untold multitudes who have not yet found Christ, will—nay, *must*—not the "heavenly hosts" be aflame for service in the interests of those multitudes? We know not what are the hidden conditions of life in the Beyond, but we may be sure that under any conceivable conditions every one who has been quickened and purified by the saving power of Christ will ask for no higher or happier function than to go forth to the "spirits in prison," that the same ineffable boon may be imparted to those who missed it here. And will not such service bring into play those highest qualities of sacrifice and devotion which it is the Gospel's function to elicit and develop? What better Heaven could there be than one whose central occupation will be to enlarge its borders, carry the spiritual warfare even to the uttermost confines of Hell itself, and bring home trophies of conquest to the "great white throne"? Here, at least, is a prospect of blessedness of very different quality from the mediæval conception of "redeemed" souls, selfishly glorying in their own bliss, and finding it heightened into ecstasy at the prospect beneath them of a multitude of "lost" souls tortured in endless fires! From that horrible travesty of what redemption is we have long since, thank

God, been emancipated by the ever-swelling tide of humanitarian sentiment that has swept over the world. But not till we have replaced it by a worthier conception will its baneful influence pass altogether away, and the worthiest of all is that here suggested. If we could comfort every sorrowing and agonised mother with the thought that she can look forward to a future in which she may continue her prayers and her ministry of love in behalf of her lost son in the world whither he was hastened before his time by bullet or shell, typhus or accident, it would bring fresh hope to many a despairing heart! Nor would those who have died here in apparent final rejection of the call to a new life be left outside the appeal of human as well as Divine persuasion. *Haply, what failed here may prevail there.* Surely no holier, happier Heaven can be imagined than one in which the most perfect spirits would pour forth their energies into the larger stream of the Divine influence in behalf of all still outside the Kingdom!

And may we not think of these spirits as working ceaselessly for us also who are still on this side of the great separating Flood of Death? Can we conceive of them as less interested, less anxious, less active in their ministry on behalf of those they love on earth than they must be for those on their own side? True, we have no scriptural hint of this, and we have seen how readily such an idea can be materialised or at least lessened in spiritual value by such a doctrine as the Roman worship of saints, and the custom of offering prayers to the creature which belong solely to the Creator as His right. None the less may we be sure that what they can do they will, nor ever cease to work on our behalf because for the

time mutual fellowship between them and us has been interrupted.

5. Finally, *the Heavenly State will be one of ever-deepening and heightening fellowship with God as revealed in Jesus.* "That where I am ye may be also" was the richest promise made by Him to those He was about to leave. "To be with Jesus," to be drawn into ever closer intimacy of spirit with Him, and with God in Him, to be assimilated ever more nearly into His likeness through the contagion of His immediate presence—this was the prospect that filled Paul, and John, and Peter with endless happiness and joy. They had known Him on earth in the lowliness of His human incarnation; they would know Him in Heaven in the splendour of His triumph over sin and death. That was all they craved for; but it was enough, since it must carry with it all else they would need, or be capable of becoming. For to know and to have eternal fellowship with Jesus must mean to know God and to "enjoy Him for ever." To those who knew Him on earth He brought an ever-deepening sense of the presence and power of God in Nature, Providence, and Grace; to know Him above will carry this process into regions unimaginable to us here and now. This is the Beatific Vision which Dante speaks of as the last of the ascending circles of revelation to which he was conducted by Beatrice (the spirit of Heavenly Truth), which was the centre of that Love, the *Primum Mobile,* "which lives at the heart of things, and which moves the whole Universe according to its own perfect will." "The Light Eternal, which only in itself abideth, which only is able to understand itself, is the Light of Love, the Fire of Love, fusing

together all fragments of reality, all beings, all attributes, all relations, into one perfect whole, binding together all the scattered leaves of the Universe into one volume of Love."

> "O wondrous grace, by which I dared to fix
> My raptured gaze upon the Eternal Light
> Until my power of vision was consumed:
> Within those depths of light I saw unfolded
> The scattered leaves of all the Universe
> In one vast volume bound by power of Love."[1]

These, as we conceive it, are the essential and abiding elements of truth in the revelation of Heaven, that is, of the state of the blessed Dead who are the eternally Living, which beats at the heart of the Apocalyptic visions of the New Testament. The Christian Church for long ages failed to distinguish the perishable form from the inner content of that revelation, having its imagination bound hand and foot in the gyves and fetters of a mechanical literalism. With the breaking-up of that literalism it fell into disheartenment, and gave up the substance with the shadow, taking refuge in an agnosticism concerning the future life which was as crude and futile. Now that the historical method of interpretation has come to its own, we are saved from both horns of this unreal dilemma, and are able to open our hearts with renewed confidence to the permanent spiritual teaching of the Bible. It is time this were done in the interests of faith, that the uplifting power of the vision of Heaven which filled the early Church and the choicest spirits of the Church in all ages, with such joy and expectancy, and made them so fruitful in ser-

[1] *Open Roads of Thought*, p. 284.

vice and so happy in worship, may be ours also. The joy they had belongs equally to us, if we will but enter on our heritage; so do the incentives, hopes, consolations, inspirations which enabled them to enjoy a foretaste of Heaven while still on earth, and gave them that spirit of "otherworldliness" which makes the best out of this world because its highest function is to be a preparation and discipline for a better.

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The Misleading Lady. By C. W. Goddard and Paul Dickay. *Boards.*

Sept. 9. Start out in attitude of speaking to those who do not will to believe.